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**“THE ASIANS AMONG US.
OPPORTUNE AND CHALLENGING TRENDS
FOR MISSION INTER GENTES”**



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Vol. 43, Nos. 5/6
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Editorial	95
ALLOCUTION D'OUVERTURE <i>Sr. Maria Pilar Benavente, MSOLA. Présidente</i>	96
ASIA'S RICH DIVERSITY: PATHWAY INTO MISSION <i>James H. Kroeger, M.M.</i>	100
THE ASIAN MISSION LANDSCAPE OF THE 21ST CENTURY <i>Pio Estepa, SVD</i>	115
MISSION INTER GENTES ASIAE CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIES AND PRACTICES OF MISSION IN ASIA <i>Peter C. Phan</i>	131
MISSION WORK AMONG CONTINENTAL ASIANS <i>Fr. Bonnie Mendes</i>	144
"MISSION WORK AMONG ASIANS OVERSEAS" <i>Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann, MSOLA</i>	149
ACCOMPANYING AND JOURNEYING WITH OVERSEAS FILIPINOS IN ITALY <i>Mrs. Dr. Cristina Liamzon</i>	153
LISTENERS' REPORTS	160
SECRETARIES' REPORTS	163
MOT DE CLOTURE DE LA PRESIDENTE	168

Editorial



"On one occasion when they were celebrating the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them: 'Set Barnabas and Paul apart and send them to the work for which I have called them' (Acts 13:2).

Mission is God's mission and "God calls us to join him in the dance of mission" (Beavans and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 2011, p. 18). What work is the Lord calling us to do in Asia, how do we have to fulfill it and with whom? That was the central tenet of the SEDOS Residential Seminar, 2011.

At the beginning of the seminar we accepted the invitation to be the guests, and the Asians our hosts. As we moved along, we realized that we, too, were the hosts and the Asians our guests. Mission is, indeed, a collaborative work. So, the Lord is calling all of us to be dialogical, listeners, and learners. This is because in Asia, Mission is dialogue (FABC) and it is put into action in a threefold dialogue: "Dialogue with Asia's poor, dialogue with its local cultures and dialogue with other religious traditions". What is the focus and what are the implications of this threefold dialogue? Please consult Fr. James KROEGER, MM, an American, who has just celebrated his 40 years of mission in Asia.

Mission is also expressed as prophetic presence. We need to delve into the situations in the world and articulate a contextual theology which will inform our attitudes, language... when we are in mission. We asked the question: What is the mission landscape in Asia today? Pio ESTEPA, SVD, guided us through the tunnel of the Mega-Migration, Mega-Urbanization and Mega-Mediatization, and when we emerged, we faced a tough challenge to become intercultural bridge builders: "a two-way mediator between God and humankind". Can we accept the challenge? Yes, if we keep on building bridges among us as congregations.

SEDOS provides new information on the radical shift in the theology of the global mission. Mission in Asia is dialogical and a *collaborative activity* carried out by Christians and non-Christians *together* for a common cause so that *missio inter gentes Asiae* may also be *missio cum gentibus Asiae*. We are sent to live and work in the midst of Asians. We have to listen and learn from them (Prof. Peter PHAN). This understanding of mission is already operative. What is lacking is the articulation from below, meaning from the grass-roots, of a theology of mission which will integrate all these concepts.

What about our praxis? We do mission by doing theology. As missionaries, we remain the guests, the strangers. How do you then enter the house of your host? This is a difficult question for us who long for efficiency. Jesus remained a guest his entire life. Bonnie MENEDEZ urged us first of all to listen and learn from the poor how to respond to their needs, because they are the ones experiencing the hardships of life and know what they really need so as to stand on their own feet. Bonnie brought home the life of the Church in Pakistan today.

Trafficking is a crime against humanity. People from the poor countries are being submitted to a modern form of slavery in rich countries. Sister Dr. Lea ACKERMANN, MSOLA, a German, burning with "passion for Christ and for humanity" works with women who were victims of forced prostitution and violence; and she set up an net-working structure: "Solidarity with Women in Distress" (SOLWODI). Her dream is to make God's dream for his children become a reality. Another genuine "Mulier fortis" of the Bible, Dr. Cristina LIAMSON, Sociologist, is a married lay missionary from the Philippines, whose mission consists in "Accompanying and Journeying with Overseas Filipinos in Italy". Cristina is very thorough in her sociological approach to the issue. This is also a collaborative enterprise with church workers, religious and lay people, and she created the Sentro Pilipino Commission on Youth and Family. We learned a lot from Cristina.

"No Asian Church is so small or so poor that it does not have something to give, and likewise, no Asian Church is so large and powerful that it does not have something to receive" (James KROEGER). We experienced a strong bond of unity among ourselves, the same sense of awe and thanksgiving. Together, being both guest and host, we will light the world with the flame burning inside us!

Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM
Executive Director

Sr. Maria Pilar Benavente, MSOLA. Présidente

ALLOCUTION D'OUVERTURE

Chers ami(e)s,
Bonsoir!

Au nom de SEDOS, soyez toutes et tous les bienvenus dans ce lieu où, comme il est coutume chaque année, nous allons vivre ensemble pendant quelques jours un temps fort de rencontre et d'échange.

Cette année, nous sommes invités à tourner nos regards vers l'Asie et les Asiatiques. Je reviendrai dans quelques instants sur le thème du Séminaire mais, avant cela, saluons cette Afrique qui, l'année dernière, nous réunissait ici même.



UBUNTU - concept philosophique africain- avait été alors une des clés de lecture principales du Séminaire et nous nous étions laissés inspirer par ce que l'Archevêque Desmond Tutu a dit à son sujet :

« UBUNTU parle de notre interconnexion fondamentale et souligne que je ne peux pas être humain si je suis isolé. Trop souvent, nous pensons à nous-mêmes en tant qu'individus, séparés des autres, alors qu'en fait je suis relié au reste de la création : ce que je fais, affecte le monde entier. Quand je fais du bien, ma bonté rayonne et c'est un don pour toute l'humanité ... UBUNTU est l'essence de l'être humain... »

Chers amis, au début de ce Séminaire sur l'ASIE, je propose que nous laissions UBUNTU pénétrer nos cœurs et nos esprits et que, avec UBUNTU, c'est-à-dire avec un sens fort d'interconnexion et de solidarité, nous observions une minute de silence en priant pour toutes les victimes des guerres et des cataclysmes naturels de ces temps, et en particulier que nous pensions au Japon qui se relève avec courage d'une si grande épreuve...

.....
Ce Séminaire a été préparé avec beaucoup de soin et d'enthousiasme par la directrice, Sr Lucie Nzenzili, par le Comité exécutif et les collaboratrices du Bureau de SEDOS. Je suis convaincue que les attentes que nous avons en venant ici ne seront pas déçues et que Samedi après midi nous partirons plus motivés pour nous engager au service de la Mission universelle de l'Eglise, enrichis d'une vision élargie et renouvelée. Ce sera, là, la meilleure récompense pour tous ceux et celles qui ont donné généreusement de leur temps pour soigner les divers aspects de cet événement.

Le thème du Séminaire de cette année s'articule autour de trois dimensions

LES ASIATIQUES PARMI NOUS DEFIS ET OPPORTUNITES POUR LA MISSION INTER GENTES

Une des dimensions de ce titre ce sont LES ASIATIQUES, présentés – ici- à la troisième personne du pluriel : « EUX ». L'autre dimension est une première personne du pluriel : « NOUS ». Et la troisième dimension du titre est une façon de comprendre la Mission en tant que Mission Inter Gentes. Ces trois dimensions forment un tout, sont imbriquées, contenues l'une dans l'autre comme dans une image tridimensionnelle.

Le lien entre le « EUX » et le « NOUS » de la Mission, s'exprime toujours dans un rapport dynamique car il s'inscrit dans l'histoire, dans des contextes socio-culturels en continuel processus de changement. C'est un lien en état permanent de questionnement, d'actualisation et de transformation. Il suffit de penser aux diverses prépositions qui peuvent les lier : « contre », « pour », « vers », « malgré », « avec », « sans », « entre », « devant », « derrière », « sur », « après », « avant »

Ce lien entre le « EUX » et le « NOUS » de la Mission que nous allons explorer, est d'autant plus engageant et dynamique que nous le situons dans le contexte Asiatique actuel... L'ASIE, non pas « un monde » mais un ensemble complexe de « mondes » résistant à toute réduction, à toute simplification. Heureusement, ces jours-ci nous aurons la chance de pouvoir compter sur des conférencier(e)s capables de nous en faire découvrir toute la richesse, et de nous aider à sortir des clichés trop faciles, des idées reçues qui ne tiennent suffisamment pas en compte les diverses facettes de cette vaste réalité.

Aujourd'hui, alors que nous sommes citoyens d'un monde globalisé, caractérisé par le mouvement des populations dans tous les sens, par les migrations et les rencontres virtuelles, par des rapports économiques complexes, par des changements dont nous n'arrivons pas à en prendre encore toute la mesure, comment définissons-nous le lien, le rapport entre le « EUX » et le « NOUS » de la Mission ?

Un bon nombre parmi nous, ici présents, appartenons à la génération qui, étant jeune, s'est enthousiasmée par les récits des Missionnaires arrivant des mystérieuses et lointaines contrées. Ces Missionnaires, hommes et femmes, nous les regardions comme des héros et avons voulu les imiter, en prenant part à leur aventure de foi et d'amour.

Pour les jeunes de ma génération, devenir Missionnaire voulait dire surtout partir vers un pays lointain. Ces « extrémités de la Terre » vers lesquelles nous nous sommes laissés envoyer au nom de l'Evangile nous les mesurons surtout en termes de distance géographique. La géographie était alors une composante essentielle, ou du moins une des composantes les plus spontanément reconnues, du paradigme de la Mission.

Pour aller à la rencontre de « l'autre » il fallait partir « ailleurs ». Le Missionnaire était par définition une personne qui partait vers des terres lointaines et ce mouvement, ce déplacement, était alors vécu dans un sens unique : « NOUS » vers « EUX »

Quelques décennies plus tard, du fait de la grande mobilité qui caractérise la globalisation, la distance entre « ici » et « ailleurs » n'est pas toujours mesurable en kilomètres. L'« autre » peut se trouver chez moi et, pour lui /elle, je deviens aussi son « autre ».

Jusqu'il n'y a pas longtemps, nous parlions de Mission Ad Gentes, pour indiquer le mouvement des missionnaires VERS d'autres peuples, cultures, croyants... Si pendant ce Séminaire nous allons parler plutôt de Mission Inter Gentes n'est-il pas parce que le contexte mondial nous provoque à changer radicalement la manière dont nous nous appréhendons en tant qu'« EUX » et en tant que « NOUS ».

La vision de la Mission en tant que Mission Inter Gentes suggère que nous faisons partie d'un monde en mouvement où, tous, nous allons à la rencontre, les uns des autres et, tous, ensemble, nous allons vers ce Jour où la Création deviendra la Maison de famille où chaque enfant aura pleinement sa place. C'est le Royaume de Justice et de Paix que Jésus est venu annoncer.

Nous sommes invités, provoqués, à penser la Mission dans des termes incluant réciprocité, mouvement dans tout sens, échange, accueil réciproque... Tout cela, sans doute, nous le vivons déjà, en quelque sorte, dans l'aujourd'hui de la Mission, mais il nous faut continuer à le conceptualiser et à le concrétiser dans une vision qui englobe théologie, christologie, ecclésiologie, spiritualité, praxis, contexte.... Telle est, me semble-t-il, la tâche de ce Séminaire et, en général, la tâche de SEDOS.

La méthodologie utilisée pendant le Séminaire sera celle de VOIR-JUGER-AGIR.

C'est ainsi que Robert Guelluy la présente :

VOIR, c'est interpréter en se sachant concerné.

JUGER, c'est faire une théologie de discernement plutôt que de raisonnement.

AGIR est une suite des deux démarches précédentes, mais aussi la condition de leur exercice.

Il s'agit d'une méthodologie englobante, d'une démarche qui intègre foi et praxis dans un contexte donné. C'est cela que nous allons vivre, faire et célébrer ensemble pendant ces quelques jours.

L'image qui me vient à l'esprit, en pensant à nous tous, ici, est celle du Cénacle. Un Cénacle aux dimensions de la Création toute entière car c'est la Création tout entière, dans l'aujourd'hui de l'histoire, qui est pour nous le lieu de l'attente, de la prière, de la révélation et de la mission.

Que l'Esprit souffle sur nous, dans ce Cénacle où nous nous trouvons réunis, et fasse toutes choses nouvelles !

*Nous te nommons vent, puissance, force
et, avec notre imagination créative, nous te nommons aussi Troisième Personne.*

Nous te nommons et tu souffles.

Souffle fort

Souffle froid

Souffle chaud

Souffle puissant

Souffle délicat

Souffle nouveau

*Souffle sur le monde : il passe du néant à l'abondance
Souffle sur l'Eglise : elle passe du désespoir à la vie nouvelle
Souffle sur le jeune David : le petit berger devient messie
Souffle, et fais toute chose nouvelle*

*Souffle sur ce jour, vent
Souffle ici et là-bas, puissance
Souffle même sur nous, force*

*Entraîne-nous au delà de nous-mêmes
Entraîne-nous au-delà de nos espoirs
Entraîne-nous au-delà de nos peurs
et que nous donnions chair à ta nouveauté dans le monde*

*Vient, vient, Esprit
AMEN*

(Prière écrite par Walter Brueggemann)

TO MAKE THINGS NEW THAT NEVER WERE

Walter Brueggemann

From the book "Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth" for Pentecost Sunday:

We name you wind, power, force, and then,
imaginatively, "Third Person."
We name you and you blow...
 blow hard,
 blow cold,
 blow hot,
 blow strong,
 blow gentle,
 blow new...
Blowing the world out to nothing to abundance,
blowing the church out of despair to new life,
blowing little David from shepherd boy to messiah,
blowing to make things new that never were.
 So blow this day, wind,
 blow here and there, power,
 blow even us, force,
 Rush us beyond ourselves,
 Rush us beyond our hopes,
Rush us beyond our fears, until we enact your newness in the world.
 Come, come spirit. Amen.



James H. Kroeger, M.M.

ASIA'S RICH DIVERSITY: PATHWAY INTO MISSION

James H. Kroeger, M.M. has served mission in Asia since 1970 (the Philippines and Bangladesh) and holds Licentiate and Doctorate Degrees in Missiology from the Gregorian University (Rome). Currently he is professor of systematic theology, missiology, and Islamics at the Jesuit Loyola School of Theology in Manila, the Philippines. In addition, he is President of the Philippine Association of Catholic Missiologists (PACM), Advisor to the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Office of Evangelization (FABC:OE), and Secretary-Convenor of the Asian-born Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life (AMSAL). His most recent books are: *The Future of the Asian Churches* (2002); *Becoming Local Church* (2003); *Once Upon a Time in Asia: Stories of Harmony and Peace* (2006) [eight translations]; *Theology from the Heart of Asia: I – II: FABC Resources* (2008); and, *A Fiery Flame: Encountering God's Word* (2010) [Manila: Claretian Publications]. He may be contacted at: jkroeger@admu.edu.ph or Maryknoll Box 285; Greenhills Post Office; 1502 Metro Manila, the Philippines.



At the beginning of the second decade of the third millennium, with joy and enthusiasm, the local Churches in Asia continue to explore their understanding and commitment to the Church's mission of evangelization. They recall the pivotal event of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and its missionary Decree *Ad Gentes* (1965), *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), and *Ecclesia in Asia* (1999). Guided by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and the leadership of individual local Churches, the Christian communities of this vast continent seek to listen to "what the Spirit is saying to the Churches" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). They seek to follow Jesus, the first evangelizer and missionary of the Father, "who took flesh as an Asian"; "the Saviour of the world [was] born in Asia" (*Ecclesia in Asia*, nn.1, 2). With renewed zeal and vigour, Asia's Churches accept their missionary vocation; they prayerfully and humbly affirm with John Paul II in *Ecclesia in Asia*, "just as in the first millennium the Cross was planted in the soil of Europe, and in the second on that of the Americas and Africa, we can pray that in the Third Christian Millennium a *great harvest of faith* will be reaped in this vast and vital [Asian] continent" (n. 1).

This modest paper, as reflected in its title, explores both Asia's rich diversity on many levels as well as some insights and possible pathways into mission as suggested by the uniqueness and complexity of the Asian continent. The author is aware that this presentation is no more than the briefest of introductions to a complex and multi-faceted reality. As Cardinal Stephen Kim Sou-hwan of Seoul, Korea, noted at the Synod for Asia in Rome (1998), Asia is not only made up of "various nations, but, one might say, many worlds". Thus, there are in a sense many Asias. It is a conglomerate of "continents" and giant archipelagoes; it has a rich mosaic of cultures and sub-cultures; it also has a wealth of spiritual heritages. In a word, any attempt to weld this diversity together will be at the sacrifice of some detail and result in generalizations. With these *caveats* and parameters we now proceed.

A. THE ASIAN CONTEXT

(1) Startling Statistics. Concrete facts and figures are most helpful in grasping the enormous challenges facing the Church in Asia. Current Asian statistics may surprise us; they should shake our complacency. In a word, they concretize the task at hand of *bringing the light and power of the Gospel into the multi-religious and pluri-cultural reality of contemporary Asia*. In addition, one is aware that, although they reflect accuracy, statistics have limitations.

Asia, the world's largest and most populated continent, constitutes one third of the land area of the whole world (17,124,000 square miles) and is home to approximately 60% of humanity (4.08 b. of 6.90 b. worldwide). It is a continent of the young (about 40% are below 15 years of age); there are more than 30 mega-cities in Asia with populations ranging from 5 to 20 million. Of the world's twenty most populous nations [2010], nine are Asian countries (in descending order): China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand. At present China's population exceeds one billion [1.33 b.]; India's populace [1.18 b.] crossed the one billion mark in the year 2000. The four largest Islamic nations in the world, each with over 100 million Muslims, are found in Asia: Indonesia (216m),

Pakistan (161m), India 147m), and Bangladesh (122m) [2007 statistics]. With this massive bulk goes a wide variety of diversity and contrasts — physical, ethnic, social, economic, cultural, political, and religious.

In early 2011 the world population estimate stood at nearly seven billion; it is projected that by 2045 there will be nine billion living on the planet. If one shrank the world's population to a village of 100 people (with all human ratios remaining the same), there would be 61 Asians, 12 Europeans, 13 Africans, 9 from South America and the Caribbean, and 5 from North America including Canada (see: nationsonline.org). In short, it is truly an understatement to say that any observer of the Asian reality "cannot but be amazed at the sheer size of Asia's population and at the intricate mosaic of its many cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions, which comprise such a substantial part of the history and patrimony of the human family" (EA, n. 6).

(2) Religious Realities. Asia is a continent rich in non-Christian cultures. It is the homeland of three eminent world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam; 85% of all the world's non-Christians are in Asia and they adhere to several of the great religions. Hinduism, born about 5,000 years ago and now the world's third largest religious body (after Christianity and Islam), with about 900+ million followers, most of them in India and neighboring countries. Buddhism is a religion and philosophy that Siddhartha Gautama, (the "Enlightened One") developed from Hinduism; it has 350+ million followers, mostly in Asia.

Islam, established by the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century, is a monotheistic religion that incorporates elements of Judaic and Christian belief. Islam has approximately 1.2 billion followers and numbers some 700+ million followers in Asia alone. Other significant religious and philosophical-ethical systems in Asia are Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, as well as many indigenous, traditional belief systems.

Catholics worldwide constitute 17.3% of all people; Christians make up 33.1% of humanity [2010 statistics]. The Catholics in Asia are approximately 115+ million; they represent only 2.9% of the more than 4 billion Asians. Significantly, well over 50% of Asian Catholics are found in one country alone — the Philippines; thus, Catholics in most other Asian nations are a small — even tiny — minority (frequently less than 1%).

The Church in Asia continues to grow. In 1988 there were 84.3 million Asian Catholics; now they have reached 115+ million (an increase of over 25%). The number of bishops worldwide exceeds 5,000; the number of priests continues to rise. Asian countries with the most seminarians (given in descending order) are: India, the Philippines, South Korea, and Vietnam. The vast majority (86%) of religious sisters is also Asian; countries with the largest number of indigenous sisters (in descending rank) are: India, the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The Church in Asia is recognized for its commitment to education, health care, and the social services.

Regarding the individual nations in the region covered by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), abundant statistics are available; only two items are presented here [2007 statistics]. For each FABC country the *estimated population* in millions is listed; this is followed by the *percentage of Catholics* in that nation: **Bangladesh** (158.6m / 0.27%); **Bhutan** (0.6m / 0.02%); **Burma/Myanmar** (48.8m / 1.3%); **Cambodia** (14.4m / 0.02%); **China** (1,322.5m / 0.5%); **East Timor** (1.1m / 97%); **Hong Kong** (7.2m / 4.7%); **India** (1,131m / 1.72%); **Indonesia** (231.6m / 2.58%); **Japan** (127.7m / 0.36%); **North Korea** (23.7m / ?); **South Korea** (48.5m / 6.7%); **Laos** (5.8m / 0.9%); **Macau** (0.48m / 5%); **Malaysia** (27.5m / 3%); **Mongolia** (2.6m / ?); **Nepal** (28m / 0.05%); **Pakistan** (162m / 0.6%); the **Philippines** (88.7m / 81%); **Singapore** (4.4m / 6.5%); **Sri Lanka** (19.2m / 8%); **Taiwan** (22.9m / 1.4%); **Thailand** (62.8m / 0.4%); **Vietnam** (87.3m / 6.1%).

No Church in Asia is so small or so poor that it does not have something to give, and likewise, no Asian Church is so large and powerful that it does not have something to receive. The five local Churches generally recognized as having clear mission potential beyond their geographical borders are: the Philippines, India, South Korea, Indonesia, and Vietnam. It also remains true that, independent of its size or number, each local Church is called to mission in the power of the Spirit.

These few religious statistics already indicate that "being a missionary Church in Asia" demands creative, innovative, *dialogical* and *inculturated* approaches to Gospel proclamation. Local Churches must consider diverse cultural, religious, political, social and economic realities as they envision a pastoral programme of integral and dialogical evangelization; they must ask themselves how they can serve to build relationships that will manifest God's love for all peoples. The task before the Churches is great; they must respond with enthusiasm and insight!

(3) Cultural Realities. The cultural gifts that Asia possesses are closely related to, and are often intertwined with, its religious traditions; together they have helped shape the histories and values of Asia's peoples. They continue to be authentic expressions of the Asian soul, and have been poetically described in *Ecclesia in Asia*. Here a rather lengthy citation is appropriate. "The people of Asia take pride in their religious and cultural values, such as love of silence and contemplation, simplicity, harmony, detachment, non-violence, the spirit of hard work, discipline, frugal living, the thirst for learning and philosophical enquiry. They hold dear the values of respect for life, compassion for all beings, closeness to nature, filial piety towards parents, elders and ancestors, and a highly developed sense of community. In particular, they hold the family to be the vital source of strength, a closely knit community with a powerful sense of solidarity" (n.6). Undoubtedly, these Asian values may be described as "gifts of the spirit" that can enrich humanity — and the Church.

"Asian peoples are known for their spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence. Without denying the existence of bitter tensions and violent conflicts, it can still be said that Asia has often demonstrated a remarkable capacity for accommodation and a natural openness to the mutual enrichment of peoples in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures. Moreover, despite the influence of modernization and secularization, Asian religions [and their cultural ramifications] are showing signs of great vitality and a capacity for renewal..... Many people, especially the young, experience a deep thirst for spiritual values..." (*ibid.*, n.6).

Seeking to describe "Asia's gifts", *Ecclesia in Asia* continues: "All of this indicates an innate spiritual insight and moral wisdom in the Asian soul, and it is the core around which a growing sense of 'being Asian' is built. This 'being Asian' is best discovered and affirmed not in confrontation and opposition, but in the spirit of complementarity and harmony. In this framework of complementarity and harmony, the Church can communicate the Gospel in a way which is faithful both to her own Tradition and to the Asian soul" (*ibid.*, n. 6).

Furthermore, in addition to a general appreciation of Asia's religious and cultural traditions, one can identify what may be learned from the diverse traditions of Asia. During the 1998 special "Asian Synod" held in Rome, the Bishops of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei noted what the Church — and *all humanity* — can learn from Asia's religious-cultural experience: ■ From Muslims the Church can learn about prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; ■ From Hindus the Church can learn about meditation and contemplation; ■ From Buddhists the Church can learn about detachment from material goods and respect for life; ■ From Confucianism the Church can learn about filial piety and respect for elders; ■ From Taoism the Church can learn about simplicity and humility; ■ From animists the Church can learn about reverence and respect for nature and gratitude for harvests; ■ The Church can learn from the rich symbolism and the rites which exist in their diversity of worship; ■ The Church can, like the Asian religions, learn to be more open, receptive, sensitive, tolerant, and forgiving in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures.

This simple narration of the "treasures of the heart" that are embodied in the numerous living faiths and cultures of Asia already alerts one to the gifts that Asia brings to the wider humanity. And, it must be noted that these gifts are not a "one-time" offering or donation (like most material gifts); they are "spiritual gifts" that continue to enrich those open to receive them. They are treasures upon which one may base valid approaches to evangelization and mutual enrichment.

(4) Social-Economic-Political Factors. Following the Second Vatican Council's injunction to "scrutinize the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4), Asia's local Churches and their continental assembly [Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences: FABC] always begin their faith-reflection with respectful attention to Asian realities, statistics, and concrete challenges. This inductive approach (characteristic of contemporary Asian theology) fosters a healthy exploration and discernment of the challenges facing the Church and her mission in the immense Asian continent.

When one begins to explore the societal realities of social, economic, and political matters, awareness of a stark fact emerges: the situations on the Asian continent are very —even extremely — diverse; they defy any simple classification. For example, "some countries are highly developed, others are developing through effective economic policies, and others still find themselves in abject poverty, indeed among the poorest nations on earth" (*EA*, n. 7). On the one hand, there are economic giants in Asia like China, Japan, Korea, and Singapore; however, there are also some of the poorest countries in the world, such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, East Timor, and Cambodia. In addition, in the development process,

ideological factors, materialism, and secularism tend to undermine Asia's traditional, social, religious and cultural values.

At the 1998 Asian Synod, the various social challenges were noted. The Synod participants spoke of "the rapid changes taking place within Asian societies and of the positive and negative aspects of these changes. Among them are the phenomenon of urbanization and the emergence of huge urban conglomerations, often with large depressed areas where organized crime, terrorism, prostitution, and the exploitation of the weaker sectors of society thrive. Migration too is a major social phenomenon, exposing millions of people to situations which are difficult economically, culturally and morally" (EA, n. 7).

Asian countries also face difficulties related to population growth; the problems can be demographic and economic, but they also have moral ramifications. There are complex influences that affect Asian societies: e.g. the global market and economic models of development, the impact of the media which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects; ideological designs of self-interest groups often resulting in the challenge of communalism and fundamentalist violence; the exploitation of women, indigenous and tribal peoples; the presence of military dictatorships and oppressive social systems; the lack of religious freedom; the prevalence of corruption in government, business, and society; the lack of social justice and participation in self-governance. The historical link of Christianity with foreign colonialists remains a liability which still lingers in the minds of many Asians. Although the list of societal difficulties and uncertainties seems nearly endless, one must also remember the heroic witness of the saints and martyrs of Asia as well as the thousands of faithful Christians upon whose witness of life the local Churches of Asia have been solidly built.

Although the Church in Asia is a very small minority in Asia's burgeoning populace she has to face momentous challenges, and must boldly continue to "scrutinize the signs of the times [and] interpret them in the light of the Gospel" (GS, n. 4). Engagement with civil society and social realities will help Asian Christianity to overcome some of the vulnerabilities she faces. She listens to the reassuring words of Jesus: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Lk 12:32). One may certainly assert that Asians who believe in Christ are still a small minority, "yet far from being a timid minority, they are lively in faith, full of the hope and vitality which only love can bring.... They are an example to Christians everywhere to be eager to share the treasure of the Good News 'in season and out of season' (2 Tim 4:2)" (EA, n. 50).

(5) World-wide Ramifications. This presentation now takes a step back to reflect on the overwhelming data emerging from the Asian continent. While these multi-religious, pluri-cultural, and complex social factors exist within the vast Asian continent, are they circumscribed and limited to Asia alone? In the globalized world, Asian influences have spread across the face of the earth. Asia is no longer "out there" overseas. Rather, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims from Asia are found in most major cities of North America and Europe and to a lesser extent on the other continents. They bring with them their cultural, social, and religious values as well as their experiences and histories. And, there are no indications that this cultural and religious interaction will abate! The Church must not miss the opportunity to deeply encounter the "Asian Diaspora"!

How might the local Churches outside Asia positively address the Asian presence in their midst? Concrete pastoral approaches need to be developed to respond to the religious needs of Catholic Asians residing in the local Church as well as for arriving immigrants. The evangelization of newcomers of diverse faiths is an opportunity which the Church cannot neglect by providing concrete social services (e.g. migration information, resettlement opportunities, employment and education). These ministries are worthy of a welcoming faith community.

Allow this writer to provide a simple illustration of how one local Church has taken important initiatives to serve the Asian presence in its midst. This pastoral example is not proposed as a world-wide norm, but it manifests the sincere effort to be a "welcoming presence" to Asians — with all their cultural, religious, and social values.

Addressing the imperative for genuine initiatives to welcome new arrivals into the community, the United States Bishops issued a beautiful Pastoral Letter in November 2000, entitled: *Welcoming the Stranger among Us: Unity in Diversity*. The Bishops noted: "We call upon all people of good will, but Catholics especially, to welcome the newcomers in their neighborhoods and schools, in their places of work and worship, with heartfelt hospitality, openness and eagerness both to help and to learn from our brothers and sisters of whatever race, religion, ethnicity or background".

This insightful document was complemented by a Pastoral Statement, approved by the Bishops in December 2001, with the title: *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*. This lengthy, well-drafted document speaks directly to the needs of the peoples of Asian and Pacific origin. The conclusion of the Statement contains these enlightening words: "By being authentically Christian and truly Asian in the footsteps of Christ, they have brought us a more profound understanding of what it means to be truly Catholic. They have taught the Church in the United States the meaning of harmony; the necessity of dialogue with their cultures, with other religions and with the poor; a renewed sense of family loyalty; the unity between diverse cultures and diverse Catholic Church communities; and the closeness of all God's creation".

In addition to the above, various arms of the Church in the United States have collaborated to prepare the book: *A Catholic Response to the Asian Presence*. In six sections, this resource addresses the following themes: (1) History, Culture and Religious Expression; (2) Demographics; (3) Educational Considerations; (4) Pastoral Structures; (5) Holidays, Celebrations and Religious Feasts; and, (6) Resources (Bibliography, Centers, Catechetical Materials, etc.). Although now in need of revision, it is useful as a model resource manual.

Finally, one more source can be noted. *Preaching the Teaching* (2005) takes such pivotal documents of the USA Bishops as (*Welcoming the Stranger among Us: Unity in Diversity*) and provides resources on how to use and apply these documents in parish catechetical programmes, civic celebrations, Scripture study programmes, and even in homilies.

Friends, in a word, these four resources are simply mentioned to alert the so-called "receiving Churches" on how to capitalize on the Asian presence in their midst — all for the enrichment of the local faith community. Indeed, the Church is truly becoming "universal" and "catholic" through this Spirit-inspired interaction.

B. PATHWAY INTO MISSION

This presentation now moves to the second section which focuses on some modest mission reflections on how the Church can effectively fulfill her mission of evangelization — particularly among God's people in Asia. The materials, approaches, and insights of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) provide the key source for addressing these pastoral-missiological trends and challenges.

(1) An FABC Introduction. The FABC has been the most influential body in the Asian Church since the Second Vatican Council. It has strengthened the bonds of communication among Catholic communities and their bishops and has contributed to the development of a shared vision of Church and her evangelizing mission in Asia. The FABC asserts that the pathway for the Church in Asia to truly discover her own identity is to continue to engage in dialogue with all God's peoples of Asia. Through the FABC, an ecclesiology and missiology of the Asian Churches has been shaped. A "new way of being Church" uniquely adapted to the Asian context and challenges has emerged. The FABC has fostered an "Asian Pentecost"! One can boldly assert that the FABC is truly "Continuing Vatican II in Asia".

The FABC is a transnational episcopal structure that brings together nineteen Bishops' Conferences from the following countries as full members: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Laos-Cambodia, Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, Myanmar (Burma), Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. The FABC has ten associate members drawn from the ecclesiastical jurisdictions of East Timor, Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Siberia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Thus, in total, twenty-eight countries are represented in the FABC, which grew out of the historic gathering of 180 Asian Catholic Bishops with Pope Paul VI during his 1970 Visit to Manila.

Aside from a modest central structure, there are nine FABC offices, which carry out many concrete initiatives and projects. The offices, purposely scattered among various Asian nations, are focused on evangelization, social communication, laity and family, human development, education and faith formation, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue, theological concerns, clergy, and consecrated life. Each of these offices sponsors a wide variety of activities that promote the growth of Asia's local Churches.

The supreme body of the FABC is the Plenary Assembly, which convenes approximately every four years. The themes, places, and dates of the nine Plenary Assemblies were as follows: "Evangelization in Modern Day Asia" (Taipei, Taiwan: 1974); "Prayer — the Life of the Church in Asia" (Calcutta, India: 1978); "The Church — Community of Faith in Asia" (Bangkok, Thailand: 1982); "The Vocation and Mission of the

Laity in the Church and in the World of Asia" (Tokyo, Japan: 1986); "Journeying Together toward the Third Millennium" (Bandung, Indonesia: 1990); "Christian Discipleship in Asia Today: Service to Life" (Manila, the Philippines: 1995); "A Renewed Church in Asia: A Mission of Love and Service" (Samphran, Thailand: 2000); "The Asian Family toward a Culture of Life" (Daejeon, Korea: 2004); and, "Living the Eucharist in Asia" (Manila, the Philippines: 2009).

(2) Operative FABC Paradigm of Being Church. Surveying the vast amount of FABC literature and the invaluable insights it provides over the past four decades, one can assert that there is a fundamental pattern or paradigm of Church and mission at work. This paradigm can be described by noting that (1) the local Church is always the acting "subject" or "protagonist" in the entire process; (2) the practical "approach" is always dialogue, a mutual or reciprocal missionary dialogue; (3) the "dialogue partners" are Asia's people, especially the poor, Asia's myriad cultures, and Asia's venerable religious traditions. This is the famed FABC "triple dialogue", which has served the Churches in Asia so well. To build up a truly local Church, one that is "indigenous and inculturated", demands "continuous, humble and loving dialogue" with all the "life-realities of the people", with their "living traditions, cultures, and religions" (FABC I, 12).

This "triple dialogue" paradigm, formulated programmatically in the First FABC Plenary Assembly in 1974 and verified in subsequent assemblies (and more importantly in pastoral-missionary *praxis*), revolves around three key poles: local Church, dialogue, and Asian peoples with their realities. Almost simplistically, it can be represented in a schema:



One must point out that the arrows on either side of the word *dialogue* move in two directions. Certainly, this indicates that this dialogical approach is always a two-fold process of dynamic interaction. There is always mutual reinforcement; this means that while the Church influences the people, their cultures and religions, the Church herself is concomitantly being shaped and moulded. In a word, the dynamic of inculturation is always at work. Readers, kindly note how this diagram of FABC's "triple dialogue" interfaces with sections 2-3-4 of the first part of this presentation.

In the opinion of this writer, this *operative paradigm* of Church and mission is the *interpretive key* to understanding and appreciating the evangelization process in Asia today. This is how the Church "lives and breathes" in Asia. Here one finds the Holy Spirit at work. This is an authentic reception and continuation of the Second Vatican Council in Asia. It is a palpable presence of God's action in and through the Asian Churches and their missionary endeavours. Much has been achieved — with God's grace. Much remains to be done to further enhance the Church's evangelizing mission in Asia — and beyond.

(3) Centrality of Local Church. To return to the topic of the local Church and to assert its centrality within this paradigm of mission may seem to be repetitive or redundant. Yet, further exploration of the central importance of the local Church is pivotal. The FABC has given nearly forty years of in-depth reflection to this topic, and some of the finest theological reflection on the subject is to be found in the FABC sources. For example, in 1974 FABC I stated that the "primary focus of our task of evangelization then, at this time in our history, is the building up of a truly local Church" (FABC I, 9). Later, in 1991, the FABC Theological Commission affirmed the "building up of the local Church as the present focus of the Church's mission in Asia", and the Commission added: "That discernment remains valid today" [1991] (TLC: C, 3). The 2000 FABC Plenary Assembly noted: "we hear the call of the Spirit to the local Churches in Asia.... It is a call to the local Churches to be faithful to Asian cultural, spiritual and social values [triple dialogue] and thus be truly inculturated local Churches" (FABC VII, *Introduction*).

The centrality of the local Church in the entire missionary project today is vigorously asserted within an Asian ecclesiology promoted by the FABC. Some citations capture this thought: "The renewal of our sense of mission will mean ... that the acting subject of mission is the *local Church* living and acting in communion with the universal Church.... In fact, it is by responding to and serving the needs of the peoples of Asia that the different Christian communities become truly local Churches.... This local Church, which is the acting subject of mission, is the People of God in a given milieu, the whole Christian community — laity, religious and clergy.... Their time has come for Asia" (FABC V, 3.3.1-2).

As the FABC Theological Commission noted: "More and more the local Churches in Asia must see themselves as responsible agents for the self-realization of the Church.... We grasp something of the significance of the local Church and inculturation in this context; those who cannot understand this fail to

resonate with the signs of our times, and the heartbeat of our peoples" (TLC: C, 4-5). Indeed, if the local Churches outside the geographical confines of Asia hope to address the "Asian presence" in their midst, they must imbibe this vision of living ecclesial communities.

(4) Vision of a Renewed Church. The Asian Churches, following FABC and local initiatives, have renewed themselves for both *ad intra* and *ad extra* service, for evangelization within the home country as well as for the *ad gentes* mission. There have been *eight* clearly observable movements in this renewal process, as found in the VII FABC Plenary Assembly in 2000. Note that these movements are not external tasks to be accomplished; they are the *defining characteristics of being Church*.

Three decades of FABC influence (1970-2000) have seen **[1]** a movement towards *being a Church of the Poor and a Church of the Young*; the ecclesial communities desire to be at the side of the poor and young multitudes of Asia — sharing their joys and hopes, their vicissitudes and problems. This first movement naturally fosters another movement: **[2]** *becoming a truly local Church* that is incarnate in the people, an indigenous and inculturated Church with a diversity of ministries.

Asian Churches have moved to **[3]** *adopting a deep interiority*, to become Spirit-filled, praying communities inserted into local life and culture, giving a credible witness of love and service. Such Churches move toward **[4]** *being an authentic community of faith*, a "communion of communities" experiencing participation and co-responsibility; in Asia this means fostering both basic human communities and basic ecclesial communities.

Genuine local Churches must necessarily move toward **[5]** *fostering active integral evangelization* and a new sense of mission; compassion toward all Asians will be the hallmark of such evangelization. This entire process involves **[6]** *promoting the empowerment of people*. Men and women from all walks of life and strata of society are to join in the common mission of the Church. Authentic discipleship will move Catholics toward an active involvement in **[7]** *generating and serving life* (against the many death-dealing forces at work in Asia).

All these movements toward a unique expression of being Church in Asia have been greatly enhanced by the foundational movement that the FABC Plenary Assembly first formulated in 1974 and has consistently and repeatedly reaffirmed: **[8]** *engaging in a triple dialogue*. Each local Church is to be in loving, continuous interaction with Asia's *people* (especially the poor), their *cultures* and *religions*.

These eight movements have become *defining marks and essential characteristics* of the Church in Asia. They clarify both the *identity* and *mission* of genuine faith communities — whether local or even international. To grasp this Asian way of being Church is to comprehend the journey of renewal that the Christian Roman Catholic communities in Asia have made during the forty years since the Second Vatican Council.

(5) Missionary Local Churches. This section is actually a further corollary of a previous section on the centrality of the local Church. The specific point emphasized here is that local Churches must be *missionary* local Churches, faith communities that have a broad outlook and an evangelistic commitment. They must avoid a kind of "self-satisfied parochialism" or "closed nationalism" which looks only to internal needs. It would be a misinterpretation of the theology of the local Church to think that "local" means focusing only on the concerns of the diocese or the country. It is precisely at this juncture that the local Churches stand to profit much from having their own mission societies of apostolic life; while these groups serve in the *ad gentes* mission, they also constantly engage with their own local Church, challenging it to be truly missionary.

The model of mission for Asia's local Churches, announced by the FABC and enacted by various Asian mission bodies, is the "exchange model". Simply, this means that mission is viewed as the "exchange of gifts between Sister Local Churches". Personnel and support are given; mutual enrichment is achieved. This helps shape, as FABC holds, "a new way of being Church" in Asia (FABC VI, 3). This entire process is aimed not only at forming local Churches, but at bringing into existence (*ecclesiogenesis*) truly *missionary* local Churches, both at home and in other countries. This "exchange model" can inform the ministry of serving the "Asian presence" in various local Churches across the globe.

(6) Specific Mission Challenges. This paper has attempted to present the growing involvement of the Asian local Churches in mission: it began with the "Asian realities" and the pivotal "FABC role"; it outlined the characteristics of a "renewed Church" and the "methodology" chosen to achieve its mission. Now, the paper focusses on five sectors of people to whom the Church wishes to direct her mission of love and

service. These groups of people are not to be viewed as passive recipients of mission initiatives; while they certainly may benefit from the Church's apostolic programmes, it is hoped that they will become active partners in her mission. These sectors identified by the FABC are: the youth, women, the family, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees.

The Church confronts the reality of Asia as the continent of the *youth*, the majority of Asia's burgeoning population. The young are a source of energy and vitality for Church and society; they can also become vulnerable victims of exploitative structures in the world. Youth's aspirations for the future must be understood within the complex changes of contemporary culture and society, already noted earlier. Such problems need a collective Church response. When will the youth become "mission-partners" with Church personnel and so realize their full potential?

The complex issue of *women and the girl-child* in Asia remains a major concern; certain cultural prejudices have a strong discriminatory influence on their treatment. Church initiatives can create effective structures for awareness-building, advocacy, empowerment, and for dealing with issues of violence to women. How can women fully exercise their right to co-responsibility and mutuality in Church and society?

The cultures of Asia value the *family* and family relationships. The family has great potential for being a cradle of faith-formation, a school of Gospel values, and an area for the social development of the child. Yet today, many anti-life and anti-family pressures have emerged. Will the Asian Churches realize that the family "is not simply the object of the Church's pastoral care; it is also one of the Church's most effective agents of evangelization" (EA n. 46)? Such matters were addressed in depth at the FABC VIII Plenary Assembly (August 2004 in Korea) which focused on the theme: *The Asian Family toward a Culture of Integral Life*.

A significant section of society and Church membership in Asia is formed by the *indigenous peoples*. As close-knit communities, for centuries they have preserved many important human values. But today, several traditional aspects of their tribal heritage are under siege: their right to land, their mineral, forest, and water resources, their unique cultures, values, and religions, their cosmic worldview, their communal way of life. How can the Church serve Asia's numerous indigenous people better?

A phenomenon of unprecedented proportions in Asia is the reality of millions of *migrants and refugees*. Today, "people migrate within Asia and from Asia to other continents for many reasons, among them poverty, war and ethnic conflicts, the denial of their human rights and fundamental freedoms" (EA n. 7). Severe problems result: gross injustice, depersonalization, loss of human dignity, and family break-up. How can governments and all religions address the magnitude of this problem, keeping in mind that the migrants and refugees themselves are to be the primary agents of change?

Only five specific, FABC-identified mission challenges have been briefly treated here. With ever-increasing immediacy and urgency, the Asian local Churches are confronted with endless new missionary situations — both on their own doorstep and in diverse communities overseas. Mission and evangelization have lost none of their urgency and necessity. John Paul II's call for mission "in Asia, towards which the Church's mission *ad gentes* ought to be chiefly directed" (*Redemptoris Mission*, n. 37) retains all its validity today.

(7) Mission Motivation. The vastness of the Asian continent and its billions of peoples; the number, complexity and tenacity of its problems; the minority status of the Church; the many challenges to mission and missionaries — all these realities could cause paralysis and discourage Christians. The local Churches of Asia constantly need grounding and renewal in their motivation for mission. A creative expression of a renewed sense of mission is found in the FABC Documents (cf. FABC V, 3).

Five core motives can respond to the question: "Why evangelize?" [1] "We evangelize, first of all from a deep sense of *gratitude to God*, the Father.... Mission is above all else an overflow of this life from grateful hearts transformed by the grace of God.... Without a personal experience of this love received as gift and mercy, no sense of mission can flourish". [2] "But mission is also a *mandate*. We evangelize because we are sent into the whole world to make disciples of all nations. The one who sends us is Jesus.... He sends us on a mission which is part of the epiphany of God's plan....". [3] "We evangelize also because we *believe* in the Lord Jesus. We have received the gift of faith. We have become Christians.... The missionary nature of the gift of faith must be inculcated in all Christians". [4] "We evangelize also because we have been *incorporated by baptism into the Church*, which is missionary by its very nature.... The Church exists in order to evangelize". [5] "And, finally, we evangelize because the Gospel is *leaven* for liberation and for the transformation of society. Our Asian world needs the values of the Kingdom and of Christ....".

(8) FABC Vision: Potential Benefits. Delving deeply into the FABC pastoral-missiological insights on the Church's mission of evangelization opens a vast panorama of approaching our Asian neighbours — wherever we find them. The fruitful ramifications of this mutual journey have been noted by others — even outside of Asia. In their lengthy Pastoral Statement *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith* (2001), the USA Bishops spoke specifically about the genuine helpfulness of the FABC “triple dialogue” approach. They wrote: “Since the Second Vatican Council, our Brother Bishops in Asia, who gather regularly as the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, have developed a pastoral approach that emphasizes a threefold dialogue: with other religions, with cultures and with the poor. Such dialogue can also be explored for its enriching fruitfulness at all levels of the Church in the United States”. The Bishops’ document explores these three dialogical dimensions at considerable length. Probably, the FABC potential that the USA Bishops have discovered and asserted has pastoral-missionary relevance in other local Churches and religious communities throughout the world.

CONCLUSION

This presentation has highlighted some significant Asian developments in mission vision, theology, and practice since the Second Vatican Council; it has described the “Good News from Asia” about mission. It has also shown how Asia’s local Churches have tried to follow the Gospel injunction: “What you have received as a gift, give as a gift” (Mt 10:8).

Pope John Paul II frequently referred to the third millennium as the Asian Millennium in mission (EA, nn.1-2); this challenge has been received with optimism and commitment by the local Churches in Asia. They have rededicated themselves to proclaiming Christ, his Gospel, his love, his compassion, to billions of Asians who have not yet come to know Jesus. For Asia’s local Churches as well as for diverse local Churches worldwide, who incorporate Asians into their communities, *to live is to evangelize!*

ABBREVIATIONS

EA	- <i>Ecclesia in Asia</i> — Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation (6, November 1999)
EN	- <i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> — Apostolic Exhortation (8, December 1975)
FABC	- Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences
FABC I	- First FABC Plenary Assembly (Taiwan: 1974)
FABC V	- Fifth FABC Plenary Assembly (Indonesia: 1990)
FABC VI	- Sixth FABC Plenary Assembly (the Philippines: 1995)
FABC VII	- Seventh FABC Plenary Assembly (Thailand: 2000)
GS	- <i>Gaudium et Spes</i> – Pastoral Constitution (7, December 1965)
RM	- <i>Redemptoris Missio</i> (7, December 1990)
TLC	- <i>Theses on the Local Church</i> (FABC)

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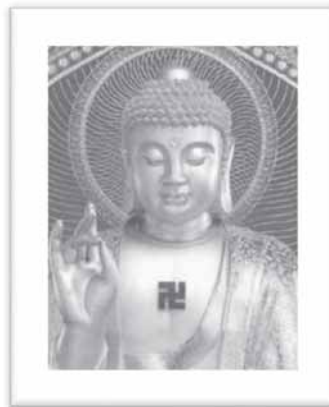
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**"Asia is the homeland of three eminent world religions:
Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam;
85% of all the world's non-Christians are in Asia".**

Text for the Power Point:

ASIA'S RICH DIVERSITY:

PATHWAY INTO MISSION

James H. Kroeger, M.M.

The local Churches in Asia
continue to explore their
understanding and commitment to the
Church's mission of evangelization.

Cardinal Stephen Kim of Korea:
Asia is not only made up of
"various nations, but, one might say,
many worlds." Thus, there are
in a sense many Asias.

A. THE ASIAN CONTEXT

(1) Startling Statistics.

Asia, the world's largest and most populated continent, constitutes one third of the land area of the whole world. Of the world's twenty most populous nations [2010], nine are in Asian countries.

If one shrank the world's population to a village of 100 people (with all human ratios remaining the same), there would be 61 Asians, 12 Europeans, 13 Africans, 9 from South America and the Caribbean, and 5 from North America including Canada.

(2) Religious Realities.

Asia is the homeland of three eminent world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam; 85% of all the world's non-Christians are in Asia.

Catholics in Asia are approximately 115+ million; they represent only 2.9% of the more than 4 billion Asians. Over 50% of Asian Catholics are found in one country alone.

No Asian Church is so small or poor that it does not have something to give, and likewise, no Asian Church is so large and powerful that it does not have something to receive.

(3) Cultural Realities.

The cultural gifts that Asia possesses are closely related to and are often intertwined with its religious traditions; together they have helped shape the histories and values of Asia's peoples.

There are several Asian values may be described as "gifts of the spirit" that can enrich humanity—and the Church.

The Church—and all humanity—can learn

from the Asia's religious-cultural experience:

- From Muslims the Church can learn about prayer, fasting, and almsgiving;
- From Hindus the Church can learn about meditation and contemplation;
- From Buddhists the Church can learn about detachment from material goods and respect for life.

The Church can, like the Asian religions, learn to be more open, receptive, sensitive, tolerant, and forgiving in the midst of a plurality of religions and cultures.

(4) Social-Economic-Political Factors.

When one begins to explore societal realities on social, economic, and political matters, a stark awareness emerges: the situations on the Asian continent are very diverse; they defy any simple classification.

Although the Church in Asia is truly a small minority in Asia's burgeoning populace and faces momentous challenges, she listens to the reassuring words of Jesus: "Fear not, little flock" (Lk. 12:32).

5) World-wide Ramifications.

In the globalized world, Asian influences have spread across the face of the earth. Asia is no longer "out there" overseas. The Church must not miss the opportunity to deeply encounter the "Asian Diaspora"!

Allow a simple illustration. The USA Bishops (2000) issued a beautiful pastoral letter: *Welcoming the Stranger among Us: Unity in Diversity*. This document was complemented by a pastoral statement (2001): *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*.

B. PATHWAY INTO MISSION

(1) An FABC Introduction.

FABC has fostered an "Asian Pentecost"! One can validly assert that the FABC is truly "Asia's Continuing Vatican II."

The FABC is a transnational Episcopal structure; it grew out of the gathering of 180 Asian Bishops with Pope Paul VI (1970: Manila).

(2) Operative FABC Paradigm of Being Church.

This paradigm asserts that (1) the local Church is always the acting “subject”; (2) the “approach” of engagement is always dialogue; (3) the “dialogue partners” are Asia’s people, especially the poor, Asia’s myriad cultures, and Asia’s venerable religious traditions.

Local Church (subject)

▲▲▲
DIALOGUE (approach)

▼▼▼
Partners in Dialogue
Asia’s Peoples
Asia’s Cultures
Asia’s Religions

This *operative paradigm* of Church and mission is the *interpretive key* to understanding and appreciating the evangelization process in Asia today.

(3) Centrality of Local Church.

“The renewal of our sense of mission will mean ... that the acting subject of mission is the *local Church* living and acting in communion with the universal Church....

(4) Vision of a Renewed Church.

The Asian Churches have renewed themselves for both *ad intra* and *ad extra* service. There have been *eight* clearly observable movements in this renewal process (VII FABC Plenary Assembly in 2000).

These eight movements have become *defining marks and essential characteristics* of the Church in Asia. They clarify both the **identity** and **mission** of genuine faith communities.

(5) Missionary Local Churches.

The model of mission is the “exchange model.” Simply, this means that mission is viewed as the “exchange of gifts between sister local Churches.”

(6) Specific Mission Challenges.

There are five sectors of people to whom the Church wishes to direct her mission of love and service. These sectors identified by the FABC are: the youth, women, the family, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees.

(7) Mission Motivation.

Five core motives can respond to the question: “Why evangelize?” [1] *gratitude to God*, [2] mission is a *mandate*, [3] “We evangelize because we *believe*,” [4] “We are *incorporated by baptism into the Church*,” [5] “Gospel is *leaven* for liberation and transformation.

(8) FABC Vision: Potential Benefits.

The USA bishops spoke specifically about the genuine helpfulness of the FABC “triple dialogue” approach. The bishops’ document explores these three dialogical dimensions at considerable length.

CONCLUSION:

For Asia’s local Churches as well as diverse local Churches worldwide who incorporate Asians into their communities,
to live is to evangelize!

POSSIBLE DISCUSSIONS QUESTIONS:

>>>>> What “Asian values” appear *most helpful* for the Church to accomplish her mission of integral evangelization?

>>>>> From your experience, what are some common prejudices against Asians in your community; how can the Church address such biases?

>>>>> The FABC has identified *five* specific “Asian” mission challenges. Do you agree with the FABC evaluation? Why do these have priority?

Pio Estepa, SVD

THE ASIAN MISSION LANDSCAPE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

INTRODUCTION

Yesterday evening, Fr James Kroeger offered us a *missiological* overview of Asia. My task this morning is to complement it with a *sociological* one. The main difference is that: whereas Fr Kroeger focused our attention on the 'constants' of the Asian mission landscape today, I will now highlight the 'variables'.

For a prompt start let me voice out a key question for which you may want an immediate response at the very outset of this seminar: *who precisely are the 'Asians among Us' that we have started focusing our missionary attention on?* Where in the world are they coming from? During this seminar I propose that we follow the lead of contemporary media by opting for a geopolitical (instead of a geographical) delimitation of Asia. My reason for this preference is that the geopolitical delimitation corresponds better with the sociocultural groupings of Asian peoples in our times.



To sum up a long etymological story, the label 'Asians' was coined by Europeans to refer to the exotic peoples living *East* of the 'western civilized world'. Sooner or later this gave rise to the distinction between the 'Middle East' (or 'Near East') and the 'Far East'. The Near or Middle Eastern peoples, however, now prefer to identify themselves with the 'Arab nations' —among whom Islam has become a dominant religion. On the other hand, to the north of that so-called 'Far East' live peoples who at a given era found an extensive political unity under USSR. Despite the recent breakaway of smaller nations from its fold, it still remains a vast socialist republic which wants to be better known as part of 'Eastern Europe'.

A notional exclusion of these peoples who prefer tags other than 'Asians' will still leave us with a grand multitude of exotic others whom current geopolitical convention subdivides into four regions:

1. **East Asia** — China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea;
2. **South Asia** — Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka;
3. **Southeast Asia** — Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam;
4. **Central Asia** — Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

An estimate of all those who reside in this zone of the globe yields an impressive figure: about 54% of the world population of today. A diachronic browse through the UNO statistics on worldwide migration since 1950 gives a broad impression that Asians outside Asia are at least twice more than non-Asians residing in Asia. On this basis, one can confidently assume that *about 60 out of 100 humans in our planet today are Asians*. The Catholics within the continent represent 3.33% of its total population, and they constitute 11.24% of the Catholic population worldwide.¹

Because of the rich sociocultural diversity within this vast region of the world, any attempt at proposing sweeping theses about the 'Asian mission landscape in the 21st century' will always limp. Any will evoke obtrusive exceptions here and there within the Asian map. Just the same, with this rightful caution in mind, allow me to venture this broad statement which my whole talk will now build on:

There are three megatrends transforming the varied mission situations in the Asian continent today. *These are mega-migration, mega-urbanization, and mediatization*. The prefix *mega-* is here meant to stress the magnitude of these trends impacting on the societies and cultures of the 'Asians among Us' ... as well as of 'Us among Asians'.

ASIAN MEGA-MIGRATION

For scholars of the social sciencesⁱⁱ, the most noteworthy megatrend happening among Asians is their worldwide *diaspora*. For the sake of presenting a shorter overview of this vast multi-directional movement, allow me to narrow down our focus in two ways. First: we will survey only external or *international* destinations ... although they signal internal upheavals and migrations taking place within Asian countries. Second: we will survey Asian external migrations only since the 1950s or after World War II ... because urbanization and mediatization also started their rapid snowballing in Asia since then.

China and India have each more than a billion inhabitants, and together constitute more than one-third of the world population. Understandably, they are the main sources of worldwide Asian migrations. Next in line are the Filipinos and Indonesians from South East Asia, then come the Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans from South Asia. The widespread foreign presence of other Asians from Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Nepal are less noticeable only because of their relatively lesser number.

In the decades that followed World War II, Asian migrations were mainly heading outside Asia: to North America (USA and Canada) and Australasia (Australia and New Zealand). In the 1970s and 1980s the worldwide demand for industrial energy made the oil-rich countries in the Middle East need rapid infrastructural development. Then in the 1990s the so-called Asian 'tiger nations' –South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and later Malaysia and Thailand– followed the lead of Japan and Singapore toward economic boom by entering and competing at the global market. Because the Middle East and the Asian 'tiger nations' were short of work force, they started recruiting or attracting contract workers from the less developed Asian countries of greater population than theirs.

These Asians who freely left their home countries may be classified under two broad types:

Contract Workers — Many of these migrants have attained above-average education, but opt for low- or semi-skilled jobs in the Asian 'tiger nations', the Middle East and southwestern Europe ... only because wages for them there are higher than as 'white-collared' employees in their home countries. Thus, men usually take up '3-D' ('dirty, difficult, and dangerous) labor as oil drillers, constructors, mechanics, drivers, etc. On the other hand, many women in these same countries find employment as domestic helpers, assembly-line workers, salespersons, or staffers in hotels and restaurants. Laws in the host countries allow them to stay as long as their work contracts last, but not to settle or to bring their families abroad for residing with them. Thus, many of them leave behind broken or fragmented families in their home countries. Furthermore, they often bear with the xenophobia of the citizens in their host countries ... against which they protect themselves by withdrawing into hidden or mobile ghettos.

Professionals — High-skilled workers or professionals mainly opt for the affluent countries North of the globe (USA, Canada, and northwestern Europe). Still another favorite destination is 'down under' to the South: Australia and New Zealand. These migrants are said to constitute a 'brain-drain', inasmuch as their valued expertise could have helped to foment and foster economic and cultural growth in the countries that they leave behind. For the sake of quick examples: since 2000, 40% of permanent migrants from the Philippines, and 30% from Sri Lanka, are university graduates mostly experts in ICT or specialized in the medical trades. Still a covert form of 'brain drain' consists of Asian youth going overseas for higher studies ... after which many of them seek eventual employment and permanent residence abroad.

Riding on these waves of legal and free migration, however, are the 'forced migrants'. Two main types of them are the victims of:

Human Trafficking — The main Asian sources for human trafficking are: China, North Korea, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Burma, India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The main destinations beyond Asia are the Middle East and Russia – but even as far as western Europe, the Americas, and Africa. Main destination countries within Asia are India, China, Japan, Taiwan and Thailand. From these Asian countries – especially China, India, Thailand and Malaysia – victims are further smuggled into other continents. Victims are lured by false promises of high-paying jobs. Usually the men end up in forced cheap labor and women as 'entertainers' (euphemism for prostitution). The worst form of human trafficking is that of children, either kidnapped or bought from ignorant parents, then enslaved into work or sex ... or even sold as organ donors or boy soldiers.

Political Displacement — In the 21st century war-torn Afghanistan stands as the biggest global source of refugees: about 3 million Afghans hosted in 69 countries within and beyond Asia. An earlier Asian crisis of

equal gravity and massive foreign displacement took place when the Vietnam War ended in 1975. In the first decade of the current century, other internal displacement of peoples spilling beyond national borders occurred in Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Burma and North Korea.

Let me now conclude this quick overview on external Asian migrations by highlighting both the challenge and the opportunity they offer for mission *inter gentes* in our century ...

On the one hand, out there within and beyond the Asian continent floats an Asian *diaspora* that eludes the compassionate reach of traditional territorial mission. Estimating its magnitude is just as elusive. Well-informed estimates of the past decade list three countries as the greatest migrant-senders worldwide: China – 30 to 40 million, India – 20 million, and the Philippines – 7.5 million.ⁱⁱⁱ What the sum of these figures found difficult to include were:

legal migrants from the 29 other Asian nations,
those illegal ones hiding from official counting,

Asian migrants of the last century who now permanently reside abroad, and
the foreign-born offspring of Asian parents that often has to resolve for itself a mixed ethnic or cultural identity.

On the other hand, most Asian migrants come from countries where Christians are an unwelcome minority – perhaps, even persecuted. But in the foreign lands where they now are, they come to experience religious freedom amid religious pluralism ... thus making them potentially open (if not already opening themselves) to the Gospel. Among these Asian migrants, too, are lay Catholics who are potential (if not already active) missionaries *inter gentes* – living in close contact with *not-yet Christian* neighbors who share their plight as marginalized foreigners, or serving *no-longer Christian* employers who are privileged citizens of their host countries.

MEGA-URBANIZATION IN ASIA

Please see Table 2 at the Appendix. The averages in the table refer to *all the countries* (and not just to the four sample nations) *under each of the four Asian subzones* listed above. On the basis of these data, one can note two broad patterns.

Firstly, though only 40% of Asia's population lives in cities, the continent has the largest number of urban dwellers (1.5+ billion) in the world. At the current rates of urban change within the continent, more than 50% of Asians is foreseen to become 'cityzens' by 2030.

This means that a *new 'mission sphere' is emerging in Asia: that of mega-urban mission*. Surely urbanization is a historical trend that began long before Christianity. Yet only few of the capitals of ancient empires and the urban centers of later European colonies had had each a million dwellers – the size of what we today call a *metropolis*. Demographers further distinguish that from a *megapolis* or *megacity* – a 'large multi-nuclear urban agglomeration of more than 10 million inhabitants'. In 1950 no Asian city figured yet in the world list of megacities. But the first decade of our present century counted 13 out of 20 of them to have mushroomed in Asia. The first five – all Asian megacities (Tokyo, Jakarta, Mumbai, Delhi, Metro-Manila) – even exceed 20 million inhabitants.^{iv} Very soon, with its booming industrial growth, China will add more megacities to the world list.

The sociocultural character of urbanization today, however, makes it differ much more radically from that of yester-centuries. Today's megacities have become truly *cosmopolises* ('global cities') that form a worldwide web of urban centers interacting with one another by way of economic and political interdependence. Furthermore, the Asian cities – whether of metropolitan or megalopolitan size – are erasing the traditional cultural divide between rural community (*Gemeinschaft*) and urban society (*Gesellschaft*) ... for better and for worse. For instance, one way by which the city is impoverishing the countryside is the steady flight of rural youth to urban centers for higher schooling and eventual quest for employment. Still, there are many 'cyclic migrants' who shuttle between short-term urban employment and seasonal rural farming. Whenever they return to their native villages, these cyclic migrants act as contagious carriers of urban thinking and lifestyle within their rural communities.

Secondly, the economic gain being reaped by developing Asia countries is the rise of national GDPs and the fall of poverty lines. But the ecological cost being paid for material 'progress' is the growing pollution of land, air, and water that nourish collective human life.

Surely the gap between rich and poor within and among developing Asian countries keeps on widening as they enter into aggressive competition at the global economy with varying degrees of success. Yet one must also give credit to those same nations whose poverty lines are drastically falling at rates inversely proportional to the rise of their GDP indices. The most noteworthy cases are that of China and India. In the late 1970s when China opened its doors to the world market, 30.7% of its population was conservatively estimated to live below the absolute poverty line. Now that it has become the main 'global factory' of a vast variety of goods of daily or domestic use, only 2.8% of the present Chinese population is reckoned to still live in absolute poverty. One effect of this Chinese success is that manufacturing companies in the other continents are losing their numerous buyers as made-in-China goods flood the world market. Similarly, when India re-entered the world economy in the early 1990s, 39% of its population was known to live below the absolute poverty line. Now that it has become the main 'back office' of many transnational corporations, absolute poverty in India dropped to 25% within just two decades. One global effect of this economic gain is that many white-collared workers in the affluent northern sphere are losing employment because their high-paying jobs are migrating – through so-called *offshoring* and *outsourcing* – to India and other English-speaking Asian countries ... and are being taken over by young college graduates with high ICT expertise yet amenable to much lower wages.

However, the gigantic economic gain of developing Asian countries seems to be won at a pyrrhic ecological cost ... for which their carbon dioxide emissions are just initial indices. Asian cities promise much more jobs than they can really offer. As a result many rural migrants to cities end up without decent work or wage and are forced to live in densely populated slums – breeders of diverse kinds of ill health, crime and violence. Furthermore, unbridled industrial production in search of raw materials ravages the natural resources of rural zones. Because of this, not only are many vitally enriching plants and animals turning into 'endangered species'. Even indigenous peoples face the extinction of their ancestral ways of life while their natural habitats are flooded by dams or razed by tractors as sacrifices for 'material progress' or 'urban development'. Many among them end up as 'environmental refugees' wandering in cities in search of menial work or dwelling space.

Let me conclude this overview of mega-urbanization in Asia by highlighting the challenge and opportunity it raises for mission *inter gentes*...

On the one hand, the Asian megacity gathers peoples of diverse colors and cultures, tribes and tongues, into one grand neighborhood. *Multiculturalism* is a political ideology that advocates respectful tolerance of ethnic differences for the sake of peaceful coexistence in society. The experience of Western Europe, as expressed by the representative voice of Angela Merkel, is that '*multikulti* has failed!' So far, it has only resulted in ethnic ghettos headstrong against social integration. Since the most persistent core of every culture consists of a religious creed and an ethical code that are sacredly upheld, intercultural dialogue – ultimately at the level of moral and spiritual convictions – is the only hope for societal peace.

On the other hand, the *ecological cost* of the economic rise of Asia's leading nations is offering an *experiential* platform for intercultural or interreligious dialogue. Antoine de St-Exupéry once defined 'love' with these words: *Aimer ce n'est pas se regarder l'un l'autre; c'est de regarder dans la même direction*'. The dialogue of the Catholic Church with other religions in Asia has often meant looking at one another's creedal and cultic differences. For this reason, it now is up against fundamentalist blocks from without and doctrinal breaks from within. Providentially, the global warming threatening the whole human species is making traditional religions and contemporary ideologies look toward the same direction – toward Mother Earth commonly cherished as the sacred home of all living creatures. Besides, the environmental crisis takes on a human face in every slum dweller forced to live at the dingy margins of cities and even to survive as scavenger of consumerist garbage. Two out of five Asian 'cityzens' live in slums or urban shantytowns. Around these Asian victims of the global economy, interreligious compassion can find *orthopractical* mission.

MEDIATIZATION IN ASIA

Please see Table 3 at the Appendix. Once again, the averages in the table refer to *all the countries* (and not just to the four sample nations) *under each of the four Asian subzones*. On the basis of these data, one can note two broad sociocultural patterns.

Firstly, despite widespread literacy among Asians, electronic audiovisual media – far more than the press – reign as the preferential channels for information and communication.

What this sociocultural pattern signifies is that another challenging mission sphere is now opportunely growing in Asia – the '*e-GenerAsian*' public as a new '*areopagus*'! The statistical data cited on Table 4 define

the 'literate person' in minimal terms: anyone aged 15 or above who can read and write. But in the English language, 'literate education' has come to mean much more. Its aim is to school people for scientific thinking and discourse. In other words, a 'highly literate person' is one who is able to analyze an event and draw out a conclusion of general and perennial validity. On the basis of such knowledge, one can then foresee or control the future occurrence or recurrence of the same event. If that all sounds abstract for you, these two video clips downloaded from the Internet may better explain how the literate mind works analytically. {videoclip}

'Post-literacy', on the other hand, does not mean the passing away of literacy ... but just that the written or printed word is becoming more of a subservient companion to narrative sound-and-image in bringing home a message. Illogical as it may sound, postliterate thinking *recognizes* an event or entity before *cognizing* it. One hears and sees something happen, spontaneously associates similar past experiences with it, then imagines a tentative story to make sense of what has been just perceived. Marshall McLuhan, the prophetic pioneer of social communication studies, once wrote that: if future historians would want to gain an insight into the *Zeitgeist* ('spirit of the age') of the twentieth century, their shortest and most eloquent sources would be the commercial adverts. Here are two of such that illustrate how the postliterate mind works. {videoclip}

At first thought, it seems amazing how rural Asians are making such a fast and smooth shift from pre-literacy to post-literacy with minimal literacy. Yet on second thought, one can recall that pre-literate transmission of traditional knowledge and wisdom is done in ritual gathering – through narrative word and symbolic image. The only hurdle in the cultural transition to post-literacy is learning how to handle intermediate electronic devices. But as these portable internet-linked gadgets are designed to be more and more 'user-friendly', one no longer needs to be long schooled in 'high literacy' to acquire sophistication. In fact, paradoxical as it may sound, enculturation or socialization in Asia is now being reversed: more often it is the youth who are initiating their elders into practical living in contemporary 'hi-tech' culture.

Secondly, the more 'mediatized' (advanced in the use of information and communication technology) an Asian society is, the steeper its fertility rate drops.

To maintain a country's population its women of childbearing age must give birth to an average of two children –just enough to replace the latter's parents. As the statistics show, developing Asian countries crossing the threshold of prosperity are opting to have less babies. What is causing this demographic decline is *not primarily mediatization – but urbanization*. One does not need sociological expertise but just practical 'common sense' to explain this social causation. A child in the countryside is welcomed as a God-sent member of the family and an added helper for farm work. But his or her counterpart born in the city is viewed as a financial parental burden, or at best a costly long-term investment of unsure distant profits. For this reason, many young Asian couples living on modest wages and in small apartments often postpone (if not forego) having just a child or two of their own.

Reinforcing such a pragmatic mentality, however, is the so-called 'consumer culture' – daily and widely advertised through public media and i-commerce. Consumer thinking and lifestyle in turn serves as the cultural humus nourishing the rise and spread of a 'postmodern' ethos. For a quick illustration of the contrast between modern and postmodern ethos, let us watch a video clip featuring a rock-star who still enjoys posthumous popularity even among Asian youth of today. {videoclip}

We first saw a marching army – symbol of some powerful unified nation. Next flit images of workers constructing something high and wide with hi-tech skill. Then, in triumphant glory, the army cuts through a cheering multitude of youth who stand expectant of some great public event about to happen. A *people*, unified by national *power*, and marching toward material *progress* ... these are three central values of modernity.

But then, the video clip ends with a postmodern twist. From that faceless army and nameless crowd emerges an exceptional individual in the person of Michael Jackson. His youthful fans impatiently await the pleasure of his grand performance –and ecstatically want it right now. The *person*, *pleasure*, the *present* ... these are three central values of postmodernity.

One may ask: how is ICT conditioning and fostering the rise and spread of the postmodern ethos? The 'old' ICT (press, radio and TV) '*broadcast*' to an anonymous public with little leeway for prompt personal feedback. But the new ICT gadgets (such as i-phones, i-pods, i-pads) '*narrowcast*' to a person, with idiosyncratic needs and wants, who has free and full control of on-line communication. Meanwhile, multiple adverts constantly flash or blink on screen and tempt the user to avail of goods or services by appealing to his or her sense of pleasure. Finally, telecommunication at cheap price enables one to chat with another at an antipodal distance at almost instantaneous speed. Such a common experience narrows down one's

sense of time to the here and now. This may help to explain why the youth of today tend to be impatiently present-oriented ('play now, pay later') ... in contrast to their future-oriented dads and moms whose parents had taught to defer the gratification of their desires with the promise of their better fulfillment tomorrow ('work now, play later').

Let me end this overview of mediatization in Asia by highlighting the main challenge and opportunity it is raising for mission *inter gentes* ...

On the one hand, evangelization must count among its favored dialogue partners the Asian youth of today nicknamed as the 'e-GenerAsians' – perhaps with their peculiar Asian brand of 'postmodernity'. In the clash of plural creeds and mores in multicultural cities, they too are inwardly searching for ethical bearing or spiritual compass. Many among them opt for the *pensiero debole*^{vi} of just 'believing without belonging'. A few others fall for the *pensiero forte* of religious fundamentalism ... even to the fanatic extent of volunteering for suicide bombing. The promise of a fruitful 'third way' exists: that of 'believing with plural belonging' – or, as paradoxically expressed by Fr Peter Phan, that of 'being religious interreligiously'. It is the path of seeking spiritual nourishment not only by 'drinking from our own [native Christian] wells'^{vii} but also 'from others' wells' ... especially those of the great Oriental religious traditions.

On the other hand, mediatization is popularizing the narrative use of sound-and-image – just when interreligious dialogue is searching for a common language of intercultural eloquence. In the late 1950s the Lutheran theologian Rudolf Bultmann^{viii} called for the *demythologization* of the sacred scriptures of Judeo-Christianity. For, according to him, the modern people of the twentieth century – schooled in secular scientific thinking – then found the mythical and symbolic language of the Bible as outdated and meaningless. Had he lived to the first decade of our century, he would have blushed in shame to note how images and stories of deep religious resonance are widely resurging in secular camouflage. In the realm of entertainment alone, one can easily cite examples – ranging from the videogames of children up to the adult-appealing films often rerun from cinema to the television set. In such a cultural setting the Jesus – who preached the Reign of God 'only in parables' and through miracles – no longer needs *demythologizing* to be meaningfully understood both by adult believers of Oriental religions as well as by the young 'e-generAsians' of today.

CONCLUSION

Let me now wind up this reflection on the 'Asian mission landscape of the 21st century' by reflecting back on the subtitle of this year's SEDOS seminar: *Challenging and Opportune Trends for Mission Inter Gentes*. It raises two questions in my mind:

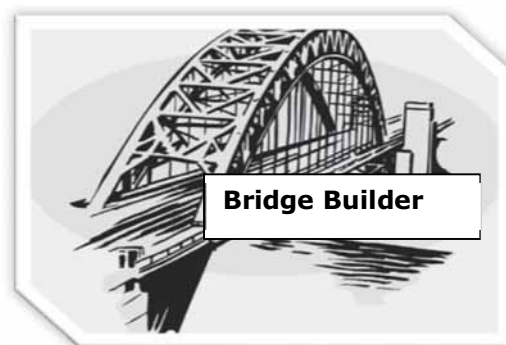
First: what is *constant* in the mission of the Church – regardless of cultural differences of peoples at changing periods of history?

Second: what is *variable* in the mission of the Church – relevant for the meaningful and resonant sharing of the Gospel with the Asian peoples here and now?

To the first question, perhaps no one can offer a more concise answer as that of classical theology. It is summed up in three Greek words: *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *Diakonia*. *Diakonia* means to serve – out of love – all who suffer, preferentially the poor and marginalized in society. *Kerygma* means to share – out of faith – the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ 'in season and out of season' (2 Tm 4:2). *Koinonia* means to gather as believers – out of hope – in communities wherein there are 'no more strangers but fellow citizens of the holy people, members of the household of God' (Eph 2:19).

For the second question, it is worth awaiting the better theological response that Fr Peter Phan will present to us tomorrow. Meantime, however, let me offer a short initial answer by resorting to a Latin word used classically to sum up what the priesthood is all about: *pontifex*. It merges a noun and a verb – *pons* (bridge) and *facere* (to make) – to mean 'bridge-builder' ... a two-way mediator between God and humankind. I find this word very appropriate also for imaging what mission *inter gentes* is all about in our century. God is addressing to us missionaries the challenging call of playing the opportune role of intercultural bridge-builders ... bridge-builders between rural and urban dwellers on both sides of the modern industrial divide, bridge-builders between generations on both sides of the ICT or 'digital divide', bridge-builders between privileged nationals and marginal foreigners across the migrational divide.

In the light of these concluding remarks, I propose three guide questions for your personal reflection later this morning, and for your discussion in language groups this afternoon. I invite you to enrich my sketchy and abstract presentation by sharing with one another your own missionary insights and experiences around *missio inter gentes* as intercultural bridge-building or mediation:



In carrying out our mission as *koinonia* among Asians today, how are we serving (or: how can we serve) as intercultural mediators between citizens and migrants?

In carrying out our mission as *diakonia* among Asians today, how are we serving (or: how can we serve) as intercultural mediators between rural and urban dwellers?

In carrying out our mission as *kerygma* among Asians today, how are we serving (or: how can we serve) as inter-generational mediators?

End Notes

¹ See Appendix: Table 1 – Catholic Presence in Asia.

² The demographic data in this subsection are mainly drawn from three e-articles:

Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, Migration in the Asia-Pacific Region

(<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=733>)

Graeme Hugo, 'Migration in the Asia-Pacific Region', www.gcim.org/mm/File/Regional%20Study%202.pdf

Graziano Battistella, 'International Migration in Asia',

www.childtrafficking.com/Docs/battistella_scalabrini_inte.pdf.

³ Graeme Hugo, 'Migration in the Asia-Pacific Region.' *Global Commission on International Migration*, 2005, page 6.

⁴ 2010 estimates by Demographia.com.

⁵ To love is not to look at each other, but to look in the same direction.

⁶ 'Weak or soft thought' – an expression coined by the Italian postmodernist philosopher Gianni Vattimo to refer to flexible and tolerant thinking that avoids dogmatic and absolute certainties (*pensiero forte* or strong thought) of what is true and false, right and wrong.

⁷ A play of words on the title of a spiritual book written by Gustavo Gutiérrez.

⁸ *Jesus Christ and Mythology*. New York, 1958, p. 37.

Pio Estepa, SVD

THE ASIAN MISSION LANDSCAPE OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Table 1 • CATHOLIC PRESENCE IN ASIA

EAST ASIA {excluded: MACAU}

	POPULATION	MEDIAN AGE		DOMINANT RELIGION	CHRISTIANS	
		male	female		Catholic	Others
China	1,336,718,015	34.9	36.2	officially atheist	0.75%	1.2%
Japan	126,475,664	43.2	46.7	Shinto/Buddhist 84%	0.4%	0.3%
South Korea	48,754,657	37	39.8	no affiliation 46%	10%	16%
North Korea	24,457,492	31.2	34.6	Buddhist 60%	.0001%	0.04%
Hong Kong	7,122,508	42.8	43.8	Buddhist 95%	10%	
Mongolia	3,133,318	25.8	26.6	Buddh. Lamaist 50%	0.04%	0.03%
Total →	1,547,234,657	36	37.6	← Averages →	0.9%	

SOUTH ASIA {excluded: MALDIVES}

	POPULATION	MEDIAN AGE		DOMINANT RELIGION	CHRISTIANS	
		male	female		Catholic	Others
India	1,189,172,906	25.6	26.9	Hindu 80.5%	1.58%	0.7%
Pakistan	187,342,721	21.5	21.6	Muslim 97%	0.79%	0.86%
Bangladesh	158,570,535	22.7	23.7	Muslim 83%	0.22%	0.23%
Nepal	29,391,883	20.7	22.5	Hindu 80.6%	0.03%	n.a.
Sri Lanka	21,283,913	29.7	31.8	Buddhist 69.1%	7.12%	0.8%
Bhutan	708,427	25.4	24.2	Buddhist 98%	0.06%	n.a.
Total →	1,428,453,472	24.6	25.1	← Averages →	1.39%	

SOUTHEAST ASIA {excluded: TAIWAN, CAMBODIA, LAOS, SINGAPORE, TIMOR LESTE, BRUNEI}

	POPULATION	MEDIAN AGE		DOMINANT RELIGION	CHRISTIANS	
		male	female		Catholic	Others
Indonesia	245,613,043	27.7	28.7	Muslim 88.22%	3.55%	5.9%
Philippines	101,833,938	22.4	23.4	Christians 92.1%	80.9%	10%
Vietnam	90,549,390	26.8	28.9	none 80.8%	6.62%	0.5%
Thailand	66,720,153	33.3	35.2	Buddhist 97%	0.44%	0.4%
Burma	53,999,804	26.3	27.5	Buddhist 93%	1.05%	3%
Malaysia	28,728,607	26.7	27	Muslim 61%	3.3%	2.1%
Total →	638,016,103	27.78	28.8	← Averages →	15.17%	

CENTRAL ASIA

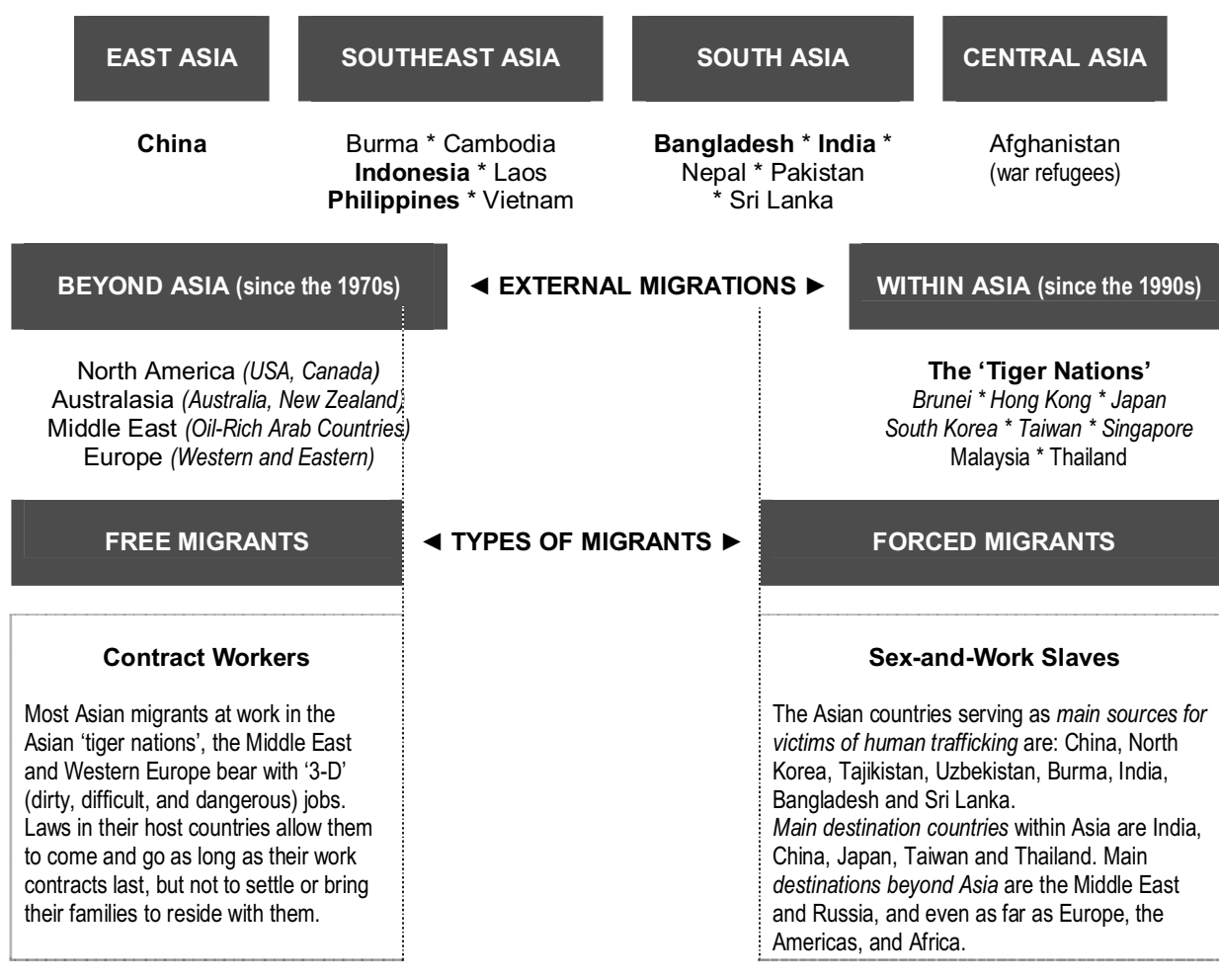
	POPULATION	MEDIAN AGE		DOMINANT RELIGION	CHRISTIANS	
		male	female		Catholic	Others
Afghanistan	29,835,392	18.2	18.2	Muslim 99%	n.a.	n.a.
Uzbekistan	28,128,600	25.2	26.3	Muslim 88%	0.01%	0%
Kazakhstan	15,522,373	28.7	31.9	Muslim 47%	0.66%	46%
Kyrgyzstan	5,587,443	24.1	26	Muslim 75%	0.56%	20%
Tajikistan	7,627,200	22.1	23.1	Muslim 90%	0.55%	0.01%
Turkmenistan	4,997,503	24.9	25.8	Muslim 89%	0.54%	9%

Total → **91,698,511** **23.8** **25.2** ← Averages → **0.21%**

NB: The averages and totals are those of ALL the countries in each of the four Asian sub-zones
(Just to make this table fit into a single page, EXCLUDED are the nations of lesser populations).

Table 2. ASIAN MIGRATIONS WORLDWIDE

The main Asian countries where noteworthy emigration is currently taking place are:



Professionals

Asian 'brain drain' flows mainly toward North America, Australasia, and north-western Europe. Even Asian migrants taking up '3-D employment' in the Middle East and southwestern Europe have had above-average education in their own countries. A covert form of 'brain drain' consists of Asian youth going overseas for studies—many of whom seek eventual employment and permanent residence abroad.

Political Refugees

In the 21st century war-torn Afghanistan stands as the biggest global source of refugees: about 3 million Afghans hosted in 69 countries within and beyond Asia.

An earlier Asian crisis causing an equally massive external migration took place when the Vietnam War ended in 1975.

Other politically unstable nations in Asia that are still causing internal displacement of peoples and external migration—though of lesser magnitude—are Sri Lanka, Timor Leste, Burma and North Korea.

— — — MEGATRENDS — — —

1. External Asian migrations mainly flow out from developing countries with surpluses of workforce—worldwide to more prosperous nations of low and decreasing fertility rates. Today, therefore, a challenging Asian mission sphere awaits the Gospel: *non-territorial or migrant mission!*
2. Most Asian migrants—*among whom women outnumber men*—are of above-average education. Riding on their waves of labor migration are victims of human trafficking and war refugees.

Table 3. MEGA-URBANIZATION IN ASIA

EAST ASIA

	URBANIZATION		LABOR FORCE			Poverty Line	CO ₂ Emissions /1000 metric tons
	ratio	rate	agriculture	industry	services		
South Korea	83%	0.6%	7.3%	24.3%	68.4%	15%	455,878.7
Japan	67%	0.2%	3.9%	26.2%	69.8%	15.7%	1,224,740
North Korea	60%	0.6%	35%	65%		n.a.	168,320
China	47%	2.3%	38.1%	27.8%	34.1%	2.8%	3,473,600
AVERAGES	52%	1.02%	16.9%	15.38%	67.72%	12.13%	Total: 5,369,475.84

SOUTHEAST ASIA

	URBANIZATION		LABOR FORCE			Poverty Line	CO ₂ Emissions /1000 metric tons
	ratio	rate	agriculture	industry	services		
Singapore	100%	0.9%	0.1%	30.2%	69.7%	n.a.	61,139.3
Philippines	59%	2.3%	33%	15%	52%	32.9%	75,299.2
Indonesia	44%	1.7%	38.3%	12.8%	48.9%	13.3%	286,027
Vietnam	30%	3%	53.9%	20.3%	25.8%	10.6%	47,530.9
AVERAGES	42%	2.7%	40.23%	25%	34.7%	14.16%	Total: 779,830.32

SOUTH ASIA

	URBANIZATION		LABOR FORCE			Poverty Line	CO ₂ Emissions /1000 metric tons
	ratio	rate	agriculture	industry	services		
Pakistan	36%	3.1%	43%	20.3%	36.6%	24%	105,983
India	30%	2.4%	52%	14%	34%	25%	1,007,980

Bangladesh	28%	3.1%	45%	30%	25%	40%	29,874.1
Nepal	19%	4.7%	75%	7%	18%	24.7%	3,229.4
AVERAGES	30%	3.18%	43.2%	22.8%	34%	25.1%	Total: 1,159,240.2

CENTRAL ASIA

	URBANIZATION		LABOR FORCE			Poverty Line	CO ₂ Emissions /1000 metric tons
	ratio	rate	agriculture	industry	services		
Kazakhstan	59%	1.3%	28.2%	18.2%	53.6%	8.2%	123,686
Uzbekistan	36%	1.4%	44%	20%	36%	26%	121,045
Tajikistan	26%	2.2%	49.8%	12.8%	37.4%	53%	4,455.1
Afghanistan	23%	4.7%	78.6%	5.7%	15.7%	36%	915.3
AVERAGES	34%	2.18%	49.46%	13.86%	36.68%	32.2%	Total: 289,534.8

NB: The averages and totals are those of ALL the countries in each of the four Asian sub-zones (and not just of the four representative countries listed under each sub-zone).

Sources: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook □ www.nationmaster.com □ unstats.un.org.

MEGRATRENDS

1. Although only 40% of Asia's population lives in cities, the continent has the largest number of urban dwellers (1.5+ billion) in the world. Today a challenging type of mission sphere is opportunely growing in the continent: *mega-urban mission!*

2. The *economic gain* being reaped by developing Asia countries is the rise of GDPs and the fall of poverty lines. But the *environmental cost* being paid for material 'progress' is the growing pollution of land, air, and water that nourish their collective life.

Table 3. MEDIATIZATION IN ASIA

EAST ASIA

	LITERACY		FERTILITY child/woman	BROADCAST MEDIA			INTER-MEDIA	
	male	female		press/1000	radio/1000	TV/household	mobile	Internet
South Korea	99.3%	97%	1.23 c/w	35	976	98.01%	886	725
Japan	99%	99%	1.21 c/w	566	945	99%	842	691
China	92.9%	78.8%	1.54 c/w	81	319	89.17%	414	122
North Korea	99%		2.02 c/w	0	146	98.01%	0	0
AVERAGE	97.3%	92.8%	1.45 c/w	187.8	491.7	86.7%	788.8	409.8

SOUTH ASIA

	LITERACY		FERTILITY child/woman	BROADCAST MEDIA			INTER-MEDIA	
	male	female		press/1000	radio/1000	TV/household	mobile	Internet
Pakistan	63%	36%	3.17 c/w	39	83	46.5%	509	106
India	70.2%	48.3%	2.6 c/w	69	107	32%	257	58
Bangladesh	53.9%	31.8%	2.6 c/w	248	42	22.9%	228	3

Nepal	62.7 %	27.6 %	2.47 c/w	98	30	13.1%	41	11
AVERAGE	71%	51.7%	2.43 c/w	74.5	81.2	42.2%	334.4	64.1

SOUTHEAST ASIA

	LITERACY		FERTILITY	BROADCAST MEDIA			INTER-MEDIA	
	male	female	child/woman	press/100	radio/100	TV/household	mobile	Internet
Singapore	96.7 %	89.7 %	1.11 c/w	272	587	98.6%	1,234	682
Philippines	96% %	95.8 %	3.19 c/w	66	130	63.1%	568	58
Indonesia	94% %	86.8 %	2.25 c/w	38	130	65.3%	348	55
Vietnam	95.8 %	92.3 %	1.91 c/w	19	98	82.7%	389	55
AVERAGE	90%	83.5%	2.26 c/w	105.2	318.3	69.3%	559.5	240.8

CENTRAL ASIA

	LITERACY		FERTILITY	BROADCAST MEDIA			INTER-MEDIA	
	male	female	child/woman	press/100	radio/100	TV/household	mobile	Internet
Kazakhstan	99.8 %	99.3 %	1.87 c/w	0	426	91.8%	823	124
Uzbekistan	99.6 %	99% %	1.89 c/w	0	402	90.5%	208	43
Afghanistan	43.1 %	12.6 %	5.39 c/w	0	5	6.29%	164	18
Tajikistan	99.6 %	99.1 %	2.89 c/w	0	180	79.46%	40	3
AVERAGE	90.1%	84.4%	2.8 c/w	6.6	226.8	74.1%	281	57

NB: The averages are those of ALL the countries in each of the four Asian sub-zones
(NOT the average of just the four representative countries listed under each sub-zone).

Sources: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook □ www.nationmaster.com □ unstats.un.org.

MEGRATRENDS

1. Despite widespread literacy among Asians, electronic audiovisual media –far more than the press– reign as the main channels for information and communication. Today, therefore, a challenging mission sphere is opportunely growing in the continent: *the 'e-generAsian' public!*
2. The *consumer culture* –diffused through the advance of ICT (information and communication technology)– is riding on rapid urbanization ... and both trends are fostering population decline ('baby bust') in developing Asian countries.

Panel Response to the presentation on May 18, 2011 "The Asian Mission Landscape of the 21st Century"

Carlos Rodríguez Linera, OP

Creo hemos escuchado un panorama muy rico, completo y conciso sobre las realidades asiáticas, tanto en el aspecto geográfico, social, cultural y religioso, como en el aspecto más amplio de presencia internacional: *'the Asians among us'*. Esto nos ofrece un rico material para reflexionar y compartir en nuestras discusiones. Lo que me falta ahora es tiempo para reflexionar, para rumiar tanta información y tantas ideas ofrecidas.

¿Qué decir; qué añadir? Creo todo lo que pueda añadir es redundante; pero, ya que nos han pedido hacer algún comentario, me tomo la libertad de escoger y enfatizar uno de los aspectos que creo encontrar en el mensaje de Pio Estepa: *y yo, como miembro de la Iglesia llamado a construir el Reino de Dios ¿Dónde me encuentro? ¿Cuál es mi actitud ante esta realidad?*



Mientras escuchaba atentamente las palabras y el mensaje de Pio, analizando y explicando el significado y las connotaciones del término Asia y Asiáticos -la gran diferencia de Países, etnias culturales y religiones-, un refrán tomado de la sabiduría asiática China resonaba fuertemente dentro de mi mente: *"La rana en el fondo del pozo" (Jing ti jr wah)*. La rana vive muy feliz en el fondo de su pozo, su único mundo; conoce todos y cada uno de sus recovecos; ella es la reina, el centro de este mundo y nada escapa a su control. El mundo entero es su pozo. Fuera parece haber algo; pero 'ese algo' es ajeno a ella, ajeno a su mundo; es 'lo de fuera'... otro u otros mundos, desconocidos, quizás interesantes y amenazantes; pero todos designados como ajenos, como 'lo de fuera'...

Para nuestra rana no importa que 'lo de fuera' sea, en realidad, un universo inmenso y variado, lleno de diferentes mundos aún mayores y más ricos que el mundo de la rana. Ella lo desconoce y se mantiene alejada y protegida de esa realidad externa, sabedora de que lo único realmente existente es su mundo. Su 'centrismo cultural' lo amalgama todo bajo un único término: 'lo de fuera', que hay que evitar e ignorar como algo que desestabiliza su propio mundo.

Podríamos decir que también el occidente, centrado en su propia autosuficiencia cultural, tiende a clasificar Asia y lo Asiático de esa manera, como un concepto geográfico único y una unidad socio-cultural única. Todos los pueblos, las culturas, las religiones... todo ello viene puesto bajo un mismo término: Asiáticos. No porque sea todo uno, sino más bien por razón de simplicidad para nuestro entender; quizás por ignorancia occidental o por inercia y desidia que nos impide cambiar y evitar hacer esfuerzos mentales.

Asia no es un sólo continente, sino más bien podríamos decir que Asia es el conjunto de 'varios continentes', cada uno de ellos conteniendo una vasta variedad de etnias, culturas y religiones, que datan – algunas de ellas- de muchos siglos o milenios. Pio Estepa, de manera sencilla pero sutil, nos hace presente esta realidad multiétnica, multicultural y multireligiosa de Asia. Y esta sutileza resalta aún más la fuerza con la cual, esta riqueza y la variada diversidad etnocultural, nos interpela como Iglesia, en la tarea de crear y dejar espacios para desarrollar unas 'teologías asiáticas'; para encarnar el mensaje evangélico en las culturas asiáticas. Pero, claro, para ello el mensaje debe estar primero encarnado en nuestra propia cultura.

"Conócete a ti mismo", nos dice la sabiduría popular. Y, en este quehacer de conocernos a nosotros mismos, nos ayuda mucho el espejo del otro; el espejo de la otra cultura, de la otra manera de concebir y expresar la religión; de la otra manera de expresar los valores morales y sociales por los cuales todo pueblo se rige y con los cuales crea su tejido social.

Quizás el occidente ha puesto mucho esfuerzo en crear y desarrollar su propio sistema de valores socio-religiosos solamente mirándose a sí mismo desde dentro de su propio mundo – rana narcisista en el fondo del pozo-. Hoy, una vez que este sistema es ya adulto, occidente se encuentra frente a otros sistemas, también adultos y fuertes como el suyo propio, que se rebelan y no se dejan absorber o avasallar; sino que también ellos claman por su puesto en igualdad (o incluso en supremacía) dentro de la comunidad internacional. Son sistemas que han tomado y toman de occidente aquello que les conviene para

fortalecerse rápidamente en su desarrollo y colocarles a la par en el poder político y negociador – especialmente tecnologías, finanzas y modos de hacer-, sacrificando otros aspectos socioculturales y religiosos que, por el momento, no juzgan tan necesarios en la arena del juego político internacional. Esto trae consigo, como nos ha sido expuesto, grandes rupturas y desequilibrios sociales que amenazan incluso el propio tejido social del país, incluso exportando estos desequilibrios sociales a otros países a través de la migración.

Cabe preguntarse aquí si estos diálogos e interacciones entre países ¿son una oportunidad o una amenaza?

Mirando solamente a los propios intereses de los bloques socio-culturales y al afán de crecer y dominar controlando mercados y situaciones internacionales, los países de cultura diferente son competidores y rivales entre sí, que presentan una amenaza a los propios sistemas y estructuras de valores. Incluso en la migración a otros países no se hace gran esfuerzo en una integración cultural y religiosa con los países huéspedes, sino, que más bien, se agudizan y refuerzan las propias creencias, aún a costo del aislamiento, para proteger la propia cultura e identidad socio religiosa. *(Recordemos lo que el conferenciante nos mencionaba hablando de la Señora Ángela Merkel que constataba el hecho de que el 'multikulti' había fracasado. Ya que ha resultado en guetos cerrados en sí mismos y contrarios a la integración social).*

Mirado desde este punto de vista, cualquier interacción se ve como una pequeña o grande puja por la supremacía; es decir, como una amenaza al propio sistema de valores. Pero si nosotros, como Iglesia, nos abriéramos a un diálogo honesto con otras culturas, podríamos sentar las bases para una nueva sociedad donde todos los sistemas culturales se beneficiasen mutuamente y se encaminasen hacia una estabilidad social internacional: la paz social.

Estamos de acuerdo con el conferenciante en su afirmación de que el 'corazón' de cualquier cultura está formado básicamente por la sacralidad de unos credos religiosos y un código ético derivado que lo conforman. De aquí que el dialogo intercultural

Por tanto, vemos estas interacciones como una gran oportunidad. Oportunidad para que la Iglesia occidental se mire al espejo de las otras culturas religiosas. Y, mirándose en el espejo, comience a encontrar su propia y verdadera identidad, so verdadero 'corazón'; 'lo esencial y constante' en la vida y misión de la iglesia: el mensaje de Jesús! Al mismo tiempo, se descubrirá también 'lo variable', aunque relevante y significativo del Mensaje. Lo que se adapta a las diferentes culturas.

De esta manera, el encuentro con las otras culturas en un diálogo abierto y honesto, nos presentaría con la especial oportunidad de 'evangelizar' a nuestra propia sociedad. Incluso diría 'evangelizar' a nuestra propia iglesia, para quedarnos con lo esencial del Mensaje y purificarla de todo lo variable añadido durante los siglos y que no forma parte del verdadero Mensaje: especialmente a la hora de compartir con otras culturas religiosas. Tendríamos mucho que ofrecer y mucho que aprender. Anunciaríamos menos las estructuras, las doctrinas y los dogmas y testimoniaríamos más el mensaje vivo y vivificante del Evangelio de Jesús. Seríamos, así, verdaderos constructores del Reino.

Teresa R. Dagdag, MM

I would like to thank Fr. Pio for his excellent, comprehensive, creative presentation; I like his clips. Presenting the Asian mission landscape of the 21st century, Fr. Pio Estepa named three megatrends: mega-migration, mega-urbanization, and media-tization. Since mission is our concern in this seminar, let us recall a mission model depicting the missionary activity from Europe to Asia in past centuries. Missionaries from these mission-sending countries went to mission-receiving destinations in Asia:

Spain/United States
The Netherlands
Portugal

Philippines
Indonesia
Timor and



Great Britain
France

Macao
India
Vietnam

It was the missionary who was credited to have brought Christianity/Catholicism to these Asian countries. Missionary groups established the Church in these Asian countries and they came because these countries did not have any knowledge of Christ and the missionaries wanted them (the pagans) to learn about him and to be Christianized. That was mission *ad gentes*. As a Maryknoll Sister, I, too, was sent out to mission *ad gentes*. In Maryknoll, most of us were sent on a trans-cultural mission to another country for our first assignment. As a case in point, being a teacher by profession, I was sent from the Philippines to teach in a Maryknoll School in Hong Kong. I helped in the school for two years, teaching Mathematics and Biblical Knowledge. Feeling the nagging need to learn the local language, I asked to go to a language school. Knowing Cantonese, I began to discern another ministry outside the school that would give me the opportunity to be with groups of people who spoke the local language thus enabling a cultural exchange. Discerning where people's needs were, I was drawn to work with the factory workers in an industrial area. There were also two Maryknoll Fathers and another Maryknoll Sister working in local factories at the time.

'SEEING': In order to have a feel for the life of the factory workers, I chose a factory where I could have more interaction with the workers. I worked in a doll factory and my job was measuring dolls' arms - size 5,6,7, etc. matching them onto the dolls that workers down the conveyor belt dressed up in nice clothes for export the United States. In Anthropology, this part of the research process, 'see'-ing, is called participant observation. After the 6-month experience, I invited other Maryknoll Sisters to join me in community on the ground floor of a 16-storey building. This resettlement estate was one in a massive housing project built by the British government, who occupied Hong Kong at the time to accommodate the influx of Chinese immigrants that were coming out of China after the Cultural Revolution. For five years, we invited workers after work to come to the Young Workers Center where courses were offered in human relations and group formation skills, in labor laws to safeguard their rights, to increase bargaining power, improve working conditions, and to promote their well-being. At the time, unlike this year, there was no minimum wage law; wages depended on market competition; speed usually determined the piece-work basis of the workers' take-home pay.

MISSION-with-WORKERS: For community, four Maryknoll sisters lived in the resettlement area in a room adjacent to the Center which was within walking distance of the wet market. We also learned to cook Chinese and live in cramped conditions. After five years, as agreed upon by the Maryknoll Sisters Region, we turned over the Center to the young workers. This ministry led to another which addressed the needs of the women workers in industrial cities with export processing zones all over Asia. I travelled to 10 Asian countries where multinational corporations (MNCs) set up factories in export-processing zones in search of cheap labor. This ministry was done in collaboration with an Asian church group called Christian Conference of Asia - Urban Rural Mission (CCA-URM) in cooperation with the FABC - OHD (Federation of Bishops Conferences - Office for Human Development) where Sr. Filo Hirota was working. I visited the Church groups and labor leaders from these countries and did documentation of the women workers situation, advocacy, education, and organization. A few years later, we formed what is now known as the CAW (Committee for Asian Women) whose founding members were a group of women religious from different congregations (a Chinese Canossian, Filipina Franciscan, Japanese Mercedarian, Filipina Maryknoll), a Korean Christian woman pastor, and a Japanese woman labor leader to extend support for the education and organization of women workers in Asia. To date, We still exists as a support and coordinating organization for women workers in Asia and has its office in Bangkok.

DISCERNMENT: I mentioned this experience to suggest a way to plan a strategy for action. After the 'seeing' part, it is wise to discern an effective response to a particular mission possibility. DISCERNMENT is actually a 'judge' process and partly entails a social analysis of a particular situation. An analytical process uses tools to examine the socio-economic-political/cultural-religious aspects of the situation. For example, some questions to ask in discerning a response to the trend on mega migration are: why do people leave their countries? Poverty? War? Violence? Uncertainty with the future? Answers to these questions could guide us in our strategy for action. **Structural problems ask for structural approaches.** Another important aspect of the discernment process is to examine and identify the skills needed for a particular mission. The process of discernment includes answering how to approach the problem? Whom to send? Where to locate, where to go? What strategy to use?

MEGA-VISION: We need a mega-vision to address a mega-mission trend. Two quotations that have guided me here are: "The glory of God is (man) a person fully alive" (St. Irenaeus) and "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The enormity of the mega-trends impels us to

identify resources that would enable us to realize a MEGA-VISION. This is a vision of life that takes into consideration not only human realities that were mentioned in the talk by Fr. Pio, but a much bigger ecological context of a new UNIVERSE story which incorporates human reality as a human species that needs to continue living in an environment that is enhancing of human growth as well as of other-than-human species. Fr. Pio underlined the opportune trend of facing the ecological cost of material progress in Asia as a way to address the challenge of mega-urbanization which brings along with it the challenge of managing pollution, solid waste management, and climate change.

STRATEGY FOR ACTION: The third component of the process is the 'act' process or action. I suggest that we consider determining a mega-response as an approach to the mega-trends of urbanization, of migration, and mediatization. A mega-response needs a strategy for action. **Collaboration** is needed to address problems of such global magnitude. Because we, religious have the gift of being in all the continents in the world today, collaboration among different religious congregations is needed. We may need to consider other forms of mission without borders, without geographical borders. Collaboration needs a certain discipline of its own, of going beyond congregational concerns to focus on collaborative mission. **Networking** is important to form alliances among missionaries who are addressing the same mega-trend, issue or challenge. We are like the yeast in the dough that need to start small until its effect spreads to the critical mass for it to rise. Using another image, we are like the seed that grows into a huge tree. To aspire to address a global concern, we need to start small, on a local level, but have a global vision. Think Global, Act Local! Think Asia, act local!

"Action on behalf of justice and the transformation of the world ... (is) constitutive of preaching the Gospel." (1971:6). This year, 2011, is the 40th anniversary of the Synod of Bishops that produced the document, "Justice in the World" in 1971. Let us learn from its wisdom to work for justice and peace in our mission engagement as we form our Mega-Response. In our action, I suggest that we strategize so that we can go with less rather than always aiming for more economically particularly to think of ways to counteract the excessive consumeristic tendencies of our world. We have observed computers and other gadgets that are now built towards obsolescence, towards having appliances getting outdated within 3-5 years or less and then these are thrown away, adding to the challenge of waste management.

In Rome, a JPIC (justice, peace, and integrity of creation) promoters' group is learning more about 'decrecimiento' or a movement towards 'decrease' rather than increase in economic growth. The latter tends to increase the demand for more raw materials including mining metals for consumer goods, depleting our Earth's resources. I suggest that we also apply this to our lifestyle: to work towards simplicity and to use less. In this way, as religious men and women, we may become more faithful to our vow of poverty and better identify with the poor and oppressed in our world. In this way, we could act as effective intercultural bridges in the dialogue of the migrant-citizen, the rural-urban, the media-literate-illiterate, and humans-Earth.

Thank you,

Peter C. Phan

MISSION *INTER GENTES ASIAE*

CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGIES AND PRACTICES OF MISSION IN ASIA

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University in 2003 and Chair of Catholic Social Graduate Studies of Ph.D. Studies. He has earned Pontificia Universitas from the University of honorary degrees: Doctor of Union and Doctor of Professor Phan began his of eighteen at Don Bosco States, he has taught at the University of America, Warren-Blanding Chair of Seminary, NY; Elms College, De Pere, WI. He is Pastoral Institute, Manila. He is the first non-Anglo to Theological Society of

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The title of the SEDOS Residential Seminar of May 17-21 2011 reads "The Asians Among Us." "Asians" refers of course to the peoples of Asia, and what is meant by 'Asia,' as shown in the map accompanying the advertising brochure, is the largest landmass stretching from the cluster of former Soviet satellite states whose names end with "*stan*" [land] in the west to Japan in the east, from Mongolia in the north to Timor-Leste in the south and the Pacific Islands in the southeast. Our map of Asia covers what is commonly called West Asia, South Asia, Northeast Asia, and Southeast Asia but leaves out the Middle East. Asia is also the most populated continent. Of the nearly seven billion people on Earth, two-thirds live in Asia, with China and India alone making up almost half of the world population.

"Us" here, I take it, refers to Christians, more particularly, Catholics, and more precisely still, missionaries, both priests and lay religious, native and expatriate. Though the title of the seminar, "The Asians among Us", places Asians in the midst of Catholics and Catholic missionaries, presumably as a gesture of generous welcome to them, we may as well, and perhaps more justifiably, put it the other way round: "Us among the Asians", since as missionaries, we are sent to live and work in the midst of Asians. Indeed, the first and most essential requirement of mission is that those who are sent live and move and

have their being with and among those to whom they are sent. For missionaries, to-be-sent is to-be-with and to-be-among those whom they evangelize.

Whereas the title of the seminar speaks of the reciprocal relations between ‘Asians’ and ‘Us,’ its subtitle, “Challenging and Opportune Trends for Mission *Inter Gentes*”, hints at one of the most radical shifts in

contemporary theology of mission.ⁱ Christian mission to non-Christians used to be called, and still is in the documents of the papal magisterium, *missio ad gentes*.ⁱⁱ Note the theological force of the preposition *ad*. The *gentes*, that is, those who have not yet accepted the good news and are still to be incorporated into the church through baptism, were once termed ‘pagans’ or ‘heathens’, and were regarded as the object or target of evangelization and conversion.

Though proselytism, that is, conversion of the *gentes* by physical force, psychological pressure, or material enticements, is frowned upon, the *gentes* are still thought to be those *to* whom the gospel is “proclaimed” and “preached”. In *missio ad gentes*, the missionaries preach, the *gentes* listen; the missionaries teach, the *gentes* learn; the missionaries bestow the means of sanctification, the *gentes* receive them; the missionaries lead, the *gentes* follow; the missionaries command, the *gentes* obey.ⁱⁱⁱ In other words, the *gentes* are the beneficiaries of the threefold ministry — prophetic, priestly, and kingly — of the missionaries. In contrast to *ad*, the preposition *inter* abolishes this one-way direction from the missionaries to the *gentes* in which the former enjoy superiority and dominance over the latter in all aspects of life, and radically reframes their relationships. It establishes fundamental interdependence and equal relationship between the two groups, or to put it in terms of the title of our seminar, between “Asians” and “Us”, so that we must say not only “Asian among Us” but also “Us among Asians”. Mission is not something done by one group, i.e., Christian missionaries, *to* and *for* another, i.e., Asian non-Christians, but rather something carried by *both* groups *to* and *for* each other. Thus, instead of *missio ad gentes*, contemporary missiology speaks of *missio inter gentes*, which the subtitle of our seminar evokes. Furthermore, mission in Asia is a collaborative work carried out by Christians and non-Christians *together* for a common cause so that *missio inter gentes Asiae* must also be *missio cum gentibus Asiae*.

In this essay I will present this new double understanding of Christian mission as a “challenging and opportune” trend, especially for mission in Asia.^{iv} I begin with a description of the religious situation of Asians as *gentes* among us (“see”). I then expound the concept of *missio inter gentes* and *missio sum gentibus* and their missiological implications (“judge”). Lastly, I explore the practices of mission in light of *missio inter gentes et cum gentibus* (“act”).^v

WHO ARE THE *GENTES ASIAE*?: THE CONTEXT FOR CHRISTIAN MISSION IN ASIA

As stipulated by the celebrated adage “See, Judge, Act, ” first proposed by Léon Ollé-Laprune, subsequently adopted by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn for the Young Christian Workers movement and then by liberation theology, and now serving as the methodological lynchpin of our seminar, we must *see* accurately before we can *judge* truthfully and *act* effectively. Hence, before speaking of mission in Asia, we must have a correct idea of who Asians are and in what sense they constitute the *gentes* among whom missionaries carry out their ministry.

In his presentation Pio Estepa, SVD has given us a rich and comprehensive bird’s-eye view of “the Asian Mission Landscape of the 21st Century”.^{vi} He helpfully delineates the three current megatrends in Asia, namely “mega-migration”, “mega-urbanization,” and “mega-mediatization”. These trends of course bring about new challenges to Christian mission. Concretely, they create “divides”, namely, the *migrational* divide pitting nationals against migrants, the *industrial* divide separating rural communities from urban societies.

and the *informational* divide splitting the illiterates from the educated. Fr Pio Estepa argues that “*missio inter gentes* consists not in moving from the ‘old’ side of a divide to venture into the newer other. Rather, it consists in building ecclesial ‘bridges’ between (*inter*) all the major divides”. Furthermore, Pio Estepa discerns in all the three divides both challenging and opportune trends for Christian mission. In light of these divides, Estepa proposes new fields for missionary endeavors in terms of *koinonia*, *diakonia*, and *kerygma*, and I will come back to them in the second section of my presentation.

While Estepa’s description of the three megatrends in contemporary Asia is of great import for our reflections on the task of Christian mission among Asians, it must be taken together with the by now familiar

and still valid analysis of the Asian context given by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), according to which Asia is characterized by economic poverty, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism.^{vii} In addition to these three megatrends and the three divides described by Estepa, I would like to draw attention to three more characteristics of Asians as the *gentes* that Christian missionaries must take into account as they work among them.

***Gentes Asiae* as Pagan?**

The first is paradoxical since in a true theological sense Asians are not the *gentes* in the old meaning of this term, that is, 'pagans' or 'heathens'. The term *gens/gentes* has a long and complex history. It has its roots in the Hebrew *goy/goyim*, which was used to designate the 'nations', that is, those peoples who, in Israel's view, have not been chosen to be in covenant with Yahweh, the non-Jews, the uncircumcised, the impure. The Hebrew *goy/goyim* was translated with the Greek *ethne* (with the adjective *ethnikos*, meaning 'belonging to the nations'); in turn, *ethne/ethnikos* was translated with the Latin *gentes/gentiles*. Finally, the Latin *gentes/gentiles* is often rendered in English as 'pagan' or 'heathen'. 'Pagan' comes from the Latin *paganus*, literally, 'villager,' often in the pejorative sense of 'uncultured,' as opposed to sophisticated 'city-dweller' or 'urban'.

From the third century, *paganus* was equated with 'non-Christian,' since the majority of Christians were city-dwellers. Soon, it acquired the connotation of idolatry and superstition and was applied to Hellenistic and Roman religions, which were regarded as rife with doctrinal errors, moral depravities, and idolatrous worship. After the discovery of the Americas and Asia, the term designates the indigenous religions of these continents, and their inhabitants are called the *gentes* (or *pagani*) and are considered as the primary target of Christian missions, the *missio ad gentes*.

In the aftermaths of Vatican II, the Catholic Church's perception of the *gentes* and their religions has undergone a radical change. *Nostra Aetate's* statement regarding non-Christian religions illustrates this theological shift well: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. It has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from its own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women" (no. 2).^{viii} Compared with the older concept of *gentes*, Vatican II's description of the *gentes* and of the relation between them and the church represents as it were a Copernican revolution, and this sea change must be taken into account when we refer to Asians as *gentes* in either *missio ad gentes* or *missio inter gentes*. Clearly, we can no longer view Asians as people living in spiritual darkness and sin who cannot be saved except through conversion to Christianity, nor can we condemn their religions as human inventions corrupted by superstitions and vices. Needless to say, as will be argued shortly, this transformation entails a different understanding of the very Christian mission among the *gentes Asiae*.

Mission in Socialist-Communist Regimes?

Secondly, the political situation of a huge number — well over one billion — of the *gentes Asiae* massively complicates the work of Christian missionaries, and that is, the continuing domination of the socialist-communist system, mainly in China and Vietnam. As is well known, the relation between the Vatican and the Chinese Government, as well as between the "Official" or "Patriotic" Church" and the "Unofficial" or "Underground" Church in China, and the fraught modus vivendi of Christianity in Vietnam present enormous challenges to how Christian Mission is to be carried out. While both China and Vietnam are increasingly adopting the free market economy, their communist Governments still regard Christianity, and especially the Catholic Church with its Vatican City State, as a threat, if not an enemy, to their survival. The *gentes Asiae* are thus a complex religious and political species among whom missionaries must dwell, and their work of evangelization is profoundly affected by these two aspects of Asian religions and politics.^{ix}

Conversion of the *Gentes*?

Thirdly, there is a stubborn fact that despite centuries of Christian mission, Christianity in Asia still remains a very small minority. Except in the Philippines, Timor-Leste, South Korea and Vietnam, Christians

make up only a tiny percentage of the population, especially in the three most populous countries, namely, China, India, and Indonesia. Though there are breathless reports about a vast number of conversions, especially in the Evangelical/Pentecostal Churches in China, mass conversions of Asians to Christianity are, barring an act of divine intervention, extremely unlikely.^x In other words, the *gentes Asiae* will most likely remain *gentes*, even if there were to be a massive evangelization in the future, and the main reason for this state of affairs, as Aloysius Pieris has pointed out, is that Asians already have their well-established religions.^{xi} This prognosis must not of course discourage mission work nor dampen missionary zeal. But it is important to take note of it so that missionaries will not entertain unrealistic expectations and the lack of conversion and baptism will not be taken as evidence of the failure of Christian mission.^{xii}

OBJECTIVES AND TASKS OF *MISSIO INTER GENTES ASIAE*

In this complex and multifaceted situation of the *Gentes Asiae*, what must be the tasks and objectives of Christian mission in Asia? Of course, the answer depends largely on how certain key New Testament texts regarding the so-called missionary mandate are selected and interpreted, such as Matthew 28:19-10, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:47-48. Another possible approach is to examine both the teaching and the practice of the paradigmatic missionary, namely, the apostle Paul, as described in his letters and the Book of Acts.^{xiii} While acknowledging the fruitfulness of these two ways, I propose a third, that is, examining the *missionary practice* of Jesus himself, and not only his words, during his public ministry as a whole. It is in the light of Jesus' practice of his mission that the above-cited biblical texts as well as Paul's teaching and practice can be correctly understood. Subsequently we will ask how Jesus' missionary practice can be a model for mission *inter gentes* and *cum gentibus Asiae*.

Missio inter gentes as Bridge-Building

Before exploring the tasks and objectives of Christian mission *inter entes Asiae* in the light of Jesus' missionary practice, I would like to return briefly to Estepa's proposal that the building of bridges to join the two sides of the three divides together constitutes the primary task of Christian mission in Asia today. Without a doubt, the concept of bridge-building forms part of a "challenging" and "opportune" contemporary missiological trend. These bridges afford the opportunity for urban dwellers, nationals, and the educated to cross over into the communities of rural people, migrants, and the illiterates and vice versa. This crossing must be a mutual movement, a two-way traffic, so as to enable all the groups to communicate with each other and to live and work together for the common good, with equal rights and dignity. The ultimate goal of this crossing-over and mutual encounter is removal of all factors contributing to mutual hatred and reconciliation of the various groups living on the opposite sides of the three divides, in both society and church.^{xiv} The hoped-for result is new human and ecclesial communities marked by justice, forgiveness, peace, and love. Needless to say, missionaries have an important role to play in promoting this bridge-building process and reconciliation.

Of course, bridge-building and reconciliation do not require forgetting, much less ignoring, past and current injustices committed by those having the power and means to control the crossing of the industrial, migrational, and informational divides and, in order to maintain their hegemony, bar others from coming over into their domains. On the contrary, genuine and long-lasting reconciliation is impossible without remembering the past truthfully, by both victimizers and victims, the former to acknowledge their guilt, and the latter to regain their human dignity in spite of their dehumanizing sufferings. Only from this truthful memory can both victims and victimizers work together to build a new society with legal and political structures promoting justice, equality, and reconciliation. Furthermore, this task of bridge-building does not in any way invalidate the "option for the poor" that was the hallmark of Jesus' ministry and has been repeatedly advocated by the FABC.

In addition to understanding *missio inter gentes* as bridge-building *between* the two sides of the three divides, I suggest that we take the preposition *inter* in the phrase *missio inter gentes* to mean *among* or *in the midst of*, so that *missio inter gentes* means *reciprocal* mission between the missionaries and the *gentes Asiae*. In other words, mission is not a one-way activity, done by the missionaries to the *gentes*, but rather an two-way activity done by the *gentes* to the missionaries and by the missionaries to the *gentes*. It is therefore

a *mutual* mission: Both the missionaries and the *gentes* “do mission” (as agents) and “are missioned” (as recipients). Furthermore, in addition to reciprocity between missionaries and the *gentes*, mission in Asia is performed *together*, so that *missio inter gentes* is also *missio cum gentibus*, which implies that there is a common cause to which both the missionaries and the *gentes* are committed and for which they labor together. I now explore these two aspects of *missio inter gentes* and *cum gentibus Asiae* in some detail.

***Missio inter gentes* as Mutual “Evangelization”**

It is a widely common experience of mission in Asia (and of course also elsewhere) that in evangelizing the *gentes*, missionaries themselves are evangelized by them, and indeed, that the effectiveness of their mission work depends on the extent to which they are open to being evangelized by the *gentes*. By this I do not refer to the banal fact that there are *gentes* who are much wiser and holier, even by Christian standards, than the missionaries themselves, or that there are certain official actions by the church as an institution that the *gentes* deem immoral and therefore find no compelling reasons to join the church. I refer rather to the fact that in not a few areas of Christian life there are teachings and practices of the religions and cultures of the *gentes* that missionaries would do well to learn and practice in order to be a better Christian and missionary. Examples abound in areas such as sacred books, ethics, prayer, spirituality, and monasticism. This fact was recognized by luminaries such as Matteo Ricci in China, Roberto de Nobili in India, Alexandre de Rhodes in Vietnam, and countless other, lesser-known but no less effective, missionaries, both women and men, in the distant past as well as in the present.^{xv}

Recognizing and celebrating the goodness and holiness of people outside one’s religious tradition and culture—the *goyim* or *gentes*—is not an invention of progressive missionaries. It was practiced by Jesus himself. Jesus praises the Samaritan leper who alone among the ten lepers whom he has cured comes back to thank him (Lk 17:17-18). He also holds up a Samaritan as the model of love of neighbor (Lk10:33-35). Jesus is said to have been astonished or amazed by “such great faith” of the Roman centurion (Mat 8:10). That Jesus was—and did not pretend to be—“astonished” (*ethaumasen*) implies that the existence of such faith in a *goy* was something he did not expect or know. Thus, in a real sense, the Roman centurion’s faith-filled behavior revealed to Jesus how universal God’s saving grace is. Even more tellingly, the “great faith” (Mat 15:28) and perseverance of the Canaanite woman, in spite of Jesus’ curt, even insulting, refusal to grant her request for her daughter’s healing, and her humble retort that even “the dogs [a Jewish term of abuse for the *goyim*, which Jesus himself used] eat the crumbs that fall under their masters’ table” (Mat 15:27) succeeded in changing Jesus’ understanding that he was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel. Here, it is Jesus’ ethnocentric understanding of his ministry that was changed and enlarged by a Gentile, and a woman to boot!

In their work, in light of Jesus’ own practice, missionaries in Asia must be willing and able to open their minds and hearts to be changed intellectually and transformed spiritually by the “reverse mission” of the *gentes Asiae* to them. Admittedly, they are severely hampered in this by the fact that the traditional descriptions of mission as “teaching”, “proclamation”, “evangelization”, and “conversion” that form part of the theology of *missio ad gentes* do not dispose missionaries to adopting a posture of listening and humility.^{xvi} Indeed, if one comes to a foreign place with the conviction that one or one’s church already possesses exclusively all the truths in all their fullness; that one’s primary task is to “proclaim” these truths, as if standing at a pulpit or behind a lectern, with a megaphone in hand, and “teach” them like an all-knowing professor; and that the objective of one’s mission is to “convert” the *gentes*, would it come as a surprise that the *gentes* are seen as nothing but targets of one’s mission (as implied by the preposition *ad*) and that success in mission is measured by the number of baptisms, as victory in a war is demonstrated by the number of casualties and cities destroyed or occupied? Would it be strange that the *gentes Asiae* will look upon Christian mission as a neo-colonialist attempt to conquer and destroy their religions? How can we plausibly defend ourselves against this charge if in fact the goal of our mission is to convert the followers of other religions to Christianity?

In contrast, suppose, as a thought experiment, we no longer use terms that imply superior knowledge and moral excellence such as “evangelize”, “convert”, “teach”, and “proclaim” to describe the objectives and tasks of Christian mission, so prevalent in magisterial documents and used by theological watchdogs as a litmus test for orthodoxy? What would missionaries do and how would they act if they come

to Asia not as proclaimers and teachers and converters and evangelizers but as guests — and uninvited, and even unwated, guests at that — who totally depend for their physical and spiritual survival on the kindness and generosity of the *gentes* as hosts? What if we bring our Christian faith not as something to be proclaimed and taught in order to evangelize and convert the Asian *gentes* but as a humble gift, as a token of our gratitude for their hospitality, which our hosts have the perfect right to accept or refuse, use or not use? What if, as becoming of grateful guests, we do not insist that they abandon their beliefs and adopt ours, reject their moral norms and follow ours, condemn their rituals and practice ours, disown their religions and be baptized into ours? Suppose, with a sincere and humble heart, we let ourselves be “taught”, “proclaimed”, “evangelized”, and “converted” by our hosts’ beliefs, moral values, modes of worship, and religious affiliations because in fact there are things that are of great, or even greater, truth and value in these than in ours.^{xvii}

Perhaps, someday, after we have known and trusted each other as friends, we can play host in our turn and invite the *gentes* as honored guests into our spiritual home, which we call ‘church’. Then we can proudly display its splendor and *gemütlichkeit*, its welcoming atmosphere and warm hospitality. Then we can talk about our beliefs and practices; tell them our family history, from the ancient Hebrews to Jesus to us as Jesus’ disciples, with our warts and all; and invite them to create with us a larger family made up of theirs and ours. But then we must reckon with the likelihood that as guests, they too will bring us their own gifts of faith, which may very well be of great use to us, or which we even may find that we are in need of very badly. In this way, our mission is no longer *ad gentes* but *inter gentes*. The “evangelizers” become “evangelized” and the “evangelized” become “evangelizers”, in mutual respect and appreciation, in open honesty and genuine friendship, correcting one another when necessary, and always reaching out to greater truth and goodness.

Missio cum gentibus: The “Reign of God” as Our Shared Goal and Destiny

The above reflections on *missio inter gentes Asiae* may appear to some to deny the possibility and necessity of mission. In fact, however, what is denied is only that conversion, baptism and incorporation into the church should be conceived as the goal and fulfillment of mission. In other words, what is denied is not the possibility and necessity of mission as such. Rather it is denied that mission should be undertaken simply as *missio ad gentes*, and not primarily as *missio inter gentes*. What mission should intend to do is not simply making the *gentes* into members of our presently existing church, which with all its current beliefs, practices and institutions, is still too small and narrow in structural design, too limited and provincial (i.e., Western and Roman) in theological outlook, too imperfect and even sinful in institutional leadership, to offer the *gentes* a liveable home.

Before we invite our guests into our home, even for a short visit, let alone for a permanent stay, we must, as good hosts, clean and spruce it up, even remodel and rebuild it, to meet their special needs and to make them feel welcome and comfortable. So too must we do with the church, and with the help with the *gentes*. It is also a common practice for the host to ask the guests in advance what kinds of food and drink they cannot eat and which they favor. So also must we do when we invite the *gentes* to come to (or into) the church, our spiritual home: Are there anything they find objectionable or harmful, anything to be modified and improved? In this way, our church will truly become the house of God for all peoples. Only in this way, I submit, the very goals of *missio ad gentes*, which are alleged to be denied by the above considerations, will be achieved, and even more effectively, by *missio inter gentes*. Of course, it is not guaranteed that the *number* of conversions will become thereby bigger, but no doubt the quality, that is, the depth and genuineness of faith will grow, and not least, the church itself will become more conformable to what God intends it to be

Implicit in this theology of mission is the notion that mission is a collaborative enterprise in which both Christian missionaries and the *gentes Asiae* are engaged and which they help each other carry out. It may be objected that it is naive to expect the *gentes Asiae* to contribute to Christian mission. The point is well taken only if mission is conceived as *missio ad gentes*. Obviously the Asian *gentes* can hardly be expected to help missionaries expand the church. Nor should they be blamed for their suspicion and rejection

of Christian mission that is geared toward what they perceive as a destruction of their religions by converting them to Christianity, notwithstanding the Catholic Church's official rhetoric about respecting the "elements of truth and grace" that may be found in their religions. (The Catholic Church would no doubt do as much if, let's say, Buddhists or Mormons or Protestants try to "steal its sheep", even though they may acknowledge "elements of truth and grace" in Catholicism).

The situation would be completely different if mission is undertaken as *missio inter gentes*, since in this case the ultimate goal of mission and the final destiny of humanity are not the expansion of the church but the realization of the kingdom of God (*basileia tou theou*), however this reality is understood and named in various religious traditions.^{xviii} To make the Kingdom (or reign or rule) of God (or heaven) — and not the church — the ultimate goal of mission is no theological innovation. On the contrary, it represents fidelity to Jesus since there is no doubt that Jesus himself made the reign of God the center of his life and ministry. It is this total commitment to the reign of God that allowed Jesus to recognize that a man who drove out demons in his name, even though he was not one of his disciples ("not one of us", said John), was not against him but for him and should not be stopped from doing it, since driving out demons was part of working for the Kingdom of God (Mk 9:38-40). Interestingly, there is no record that the exorcizing man ever knew Jesus personally, or that Jesus ever attempted to make him his disciple or required him to be one. It is thus possible (and indeed a fact) that a person can do something in the name of Jesus without knowing him or being his follower.

There is another reason why in Asia *missio inter gentes* must also be *missio cum gentibus*. I mentioned above both the tiny percentage of Christians among the Asian population and the unlikelihood of mass conversion of the Asian *gentes* to Christianity. This means that from a practical point of view Christians in Asia will never be able to effectively work for God's reign of justice, peace and reconciliation without the collaboration of the *gentes*. They simply cannot 'go it alone.' This is especially true in socialist-communist countries and in countries with Muslim majority, where Christianity lacks necessary resources and encounters severe restrictions to its mission. Thus, while the *gentes* cannot and must not be expected to work for the expansion of the church, they can be encouraged to work with Christians for the reign of God — however this reality is named, since Buddhists, for instance, do not even mention God — by promoting justice and peace, reconciliation and love. Indeed, in many places of Asia, they have in fact done so. Once again, it is to be noted that in *missio inter gentes* and *cum gentibus*, the goals of Christian mission can be amply fulfilled, without the *gentes* being converted, baptized, and incorporated into the church. Of course, there is no opposition between church and the reign of God. In fact, the former is a sign and instrument, or sacrament, or symbol of the latter. But it would be idolatrous to identify the church with the reign of God. It is the difference between the two that enables the *gentes Asiae* to work for the kingdom of God and yet not belonging to the church, *reapse* [in fact] or *in voto* [in desire].

MISSION AS ACTION: DOING THINGS "IN THE NAME OF JESUS"

Christian mission presupposes seeing accurately and judging truthfully. However, these are only conditions for acting effectively in mission. Mission itself must be acting, doing concrete things, and not just preaching and proclaiming and teaching, even though these do constitute mission provided that they are done in the way of *missio inter gentes et cum gentibus* as proposed above. But mission must involve much more than *verbal* activities and deeds by words, important though they may be. No doubt the Western churches heavily favors the use of words and speeches and books, and, not to fall behind the time, Websites and Facebook and Twitter. Witness the tsunami of documents and pronouncements of all kinds emanating from the Roman magisterium, not to mention papal autobiographies and theological tracts, inundating churches that hardly have the time and ability to read and understand them, written as they often are in a theological idiom well-nigh incomprehensible to the average people. Sadly, some think that in issuing these documents the magisterium is fulfilling its 'prophetic' or teaching mission.

Mission as action involves of course much more than producing this deluge of words. Mission demands, at least in Asia, as much if not more, non-verbal actions. Silence, profound and contemplative, that follows speaking, still remains the most effective communication among believers. In addition, mission

includes actions for liberation and development, human rights, social justice, peace and reconciliation, education, and health care, just to mention a few areas in which missionaries in Asia, both Catholic and Protestant, have labored long and well, sometimes at the risk of their own lives.

The question inevitably arises as to how to distinguish these activities as part of Christian mission from those of social activists and NGOs of various kinds. Underlying beneath this question is the anxiety, especially among church authorities, that missionaries have become mere secular social activists and have lost what is called the “vertical” dimension of Christian mission. In response, let it be noted first of all that from a sociological point of view, there are no differences between the activities of missionaries and those of social activists in these areas. The former are not nobler, holier, or more effective than the latter simply because they are done by the church, nor should they be played against each other. Instead of competition for resources and influence, there should be collaboration between church agencies and secular groups.

Secondly, these social activities must not be viewed simply as — to use a common expression of the recent past — “pre-evangelization” (to be done by the laity, mostly), that is, a prelude to or means for “real” evangelization through preaching, sacramental celebrations, and pastoral leadership (the reserved province of the ordained). Rather, they are a constitutive and integral part of mission in which the *gentes* can fully participate.

Thirdly, the difference between church mission and social activism is not between the alleged “verticality” of the former and the “horizontality” of the latter, nor between the former’s concern for salvation of the soul and the latter’s concern for the welfare of the body. In fact, the one cannot be obtained in its fullness without the other. Rather the distinctiveness of Christian mission lies in the fact that it is performed “in the name of Jesus”. This, as we have seen above, does not mean: with an explicit knowledge of Jesus or membership in his circle of disciples. Much less does it mean: with the official authorization or “mandatum” by the church hierarchy, or with the powers associated with the sacrament of orders, or with the spiritual sacrifices of religious vows. Rather, mission done “in the name of Jesus” means mission carried out in the way Jesus did and for the cause for which he lived and was killed, that is, the Reign of God. Thus, the distinction between mission and social activism does not lie in *what* is being done and in the alleged spiritual superiority of the former over latter, but in *how* mission is done (i.e., in Jesus’ way of self-emptying and powerlessness) and *why* it is done (i.e., for the sake of the reign of God).

In summary, to carry out their mission, Christians must *see* accurately, *judge* truthfully, and *act* effectively. Mission in Asia requires that we know who the *gentes Asiae* are in their contemporary socio-political and religious contexts; that we do mission among them (*inter gentes*) and with them (*cum gentibus*); and that we work together for the reign of God. Because the goal and destiny of mission is the Kingdom of God, mission is not ours nor the church’s. It is rather the mission of the Trinitarian God (*missio Dei*), which the Father initiates, the Son performs, and the Spirit fulfills, for the sake of reconciling all things in God and a sharing in God’s eternal life. All humanity — including the *goyim/ethne/gentes/pagans* — is called to participate in this mission, and the church is but a sacrament of the *missio Dei*, and we the unworthy servants.

End notes

¹ I am not claiming that the organizers of SEDOS 2011 subscribe to the theological reflections on mission that I offer below, in whole or in part, and hence, they should not be held responsible for them. I am merely suggesting that the expression *missio inter gentes* can give rise to a theology of mission that follows and for which I alone bear responsibility.

² See, for instance, Pope John Paul II’s encyclical on mission *Redemptoris Missio* (1990). The pope laments the waning of *missio inter gentes* and devotes a whole chapter of his encyclical to it (Chapter IV: “The Vast Horizons of the Mission *Ad Gentes*”).

³ I am not asserting that this is how all missionaries who adopt the *missio ad gentes* model actually behave; in fact, many don’t. I am only claiming that the *missio ad gentes* model of mission conceives, at least implicitly, the relation between the missionary and the *gentes* in this way.

⁴ Among the plethora of contemporary works on mission the following deserve mentioned: David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991); J. Andrew Kirk, *What Is Mission? Theological Explorations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000); Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004); Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, eds. *Mission for the Twenty-first Century* (Chicago: CCGM Publications, 2001); Roger Schroeder, *What Is the Mission of the Church? A Guide for Catholics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999); Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross, eds., *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); Robert J. Schreiter, ed., *Mission in the Third Millennium* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001); Francis Anekwe Oboji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006); Dana Robert, *Christian Mission: How Christianity Became a World Religion* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009; Charles E. Van Engen, Darrell Whiteman and J. Dudley Woodberry, eds., *Paradigm Shifts in Christian Witness: Insights from Anthropology, Communications, and Spiritual Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008); and Rober L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, eds., *Landmark Essays in Mission and World Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

⁵ For a survey of contemporary Asian Christianity, see Peter C. Phan, ed., *Christianities in Asia* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

⁶ Pio Estepa, SVD's presentation entitled "The Asian Mission Landscape of the 21st Century" was given on the second day of the SEDOS Seminar, under the theme of "SEE".

⁷ For the FABC's documents, see the four volumes titled *For All the Peoples of Asia* (1992, 1997, 2002, and 2007, the first edited by Gaudencio Rosales and G. G. Arévalo, and the last three by Franz-Josef Eilers) and published by Claretian Publications, Quezon City, Philippines. See also Peter C. Phan, ed., *The Asian Synod: Texts and Commentaries* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

⁸ English translation is taken from Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican II: Constitutions Decrees Declarations* (Northport, NY: Costello, 2007). For a comprehensive overview of Catholic theology of religion, see Karl J. Becker and Ilana Morali, eds., *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010).

⁹ For accounts of Christianity in China, see Edmond Tang & Jean-Paul Wiest, eds., *The Catholic Church in Modern China* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993); Stephen Uhalley Jr. and Xiaoxin Wu, eds., *China and Christianity: Burdened Past, Hopeful Future* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2001); Beatrice Leung & William T. Liu, *The Chinese Catholic Church in Conflict: 1949-2001* (Boca Raton, FL: Universal Publishers, 2004); Jean-Pierre Charbonnier, *Christians in China: A.D. 600-2000*, trans. M. N. L. Couve de Murville (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007); and Philip L. Wickeri, *Reconstructing Christianity in China: K. H. Ting and the Chinese Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007).

¹⁰ On Evangelical/Pentecostals in Asia, see Allan Anderson and Edmond Tang, eds., *Asian and Pentecostal: The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Regnum, 2005) and Wonsuk and Julie C. Ma, eds., *Asian Church & God's Mission* (West Caldwell, NJ: MWM, 2003).

¹¹ See Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).

¹² On the relation between mission and conversion, see Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 45-61.

¹³ There is no point in citing works on mission in the New Testament here since there are literally legions of them. For a massive, two-volume study, totaling to 3000 pages (quite a few of them with very small print!), see Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission* vol. 1 *Jesus and the Twelve* and vol. 2 *Paul and the Early Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

¹⁴ On the reconciliation as part of mission, see the numerous works of Robert Schreiter. See also Peter C. Phan, "Peace Building and Reconciliation: Interreligious Dialogue and Catholic Spirituality". *Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis*, ed. Robert J. Schreiter, R. Scott Apply by and Gerard Powers. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 2010, 332-365.

¹⁵ In this context it is vitally important, even a matter of sheer justice and historical accuracy, to recognize the role of lay women and women religious in mission. On this, see the pioneering works of Dana Robert.

¹⁶ On the relationship among proclamation and mission, see Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues*, 32-44.

¹⁷ On the concept of the missionary as guest, see the insightful writings of Anthony Gittins.

¹⁸ On the symbol of the Kingdom of God in mission, see Peter C. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 75-97.

MISSION *INTER GENTES ASIAE* Response to Presentation of **Fr Peter Phan**



Sister Georgeanne M. Donovan, SMSM
19th May 2011

First of all, I would like to thank you, Fr Phan [Peter], for your presentation on Mission *Inter Gentes Asiae*. I appreciated your clear distinction between the Church's former understanding of the *gentes* (as the heathens/pagans) through the radical shift in her understanding following Vatican II ("The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. It has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from its own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women" *Nostra Aetate*, no.2). I believe that this shift at Vatican II laid the ground-work for further development in missiology. You noted quite rightly that the shift in the understanding of the word/concept of the "gentes" creates a ripple effect of a shift in the Church's very understanding of *Mission*. As you say, "...this transformation entails a different understanding of the very Christian mission among the *gentes Asiae*." I would go further to say that this transformation entails a different understanding of Christian mission...full stop. That is to say, there has been a radical shift in the understanding of Christian mission as lived and expressed in every place, in every time and in every situation.

Following my first reading of this presentation, I thought: "But isn't this the understanding of 'mission' that all Catholic missionaries hold today? The awareness that

- The Mission is God's mission, not ours (Church, congregations, individuals) –
- God sent Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to effect this mission –
- All disciples of Jesus are called to participate in the mission of Jesus by working for peace, justice and the fostering right relationships in our world, thus striving to build the Reign of God –
- Missionaries participate in this mission in a culture other than their own – be that culture in one's own country or in another country, with and among a people to whom they have been sent, (and, hopefully, invited) with the awareness that
 - a) we walk on holy ground where the Spirit has already preceded us,
 - b) we open ourselves to receive from the richness of 'the other' as well as to share, when invited, the richness of our own faith tradition and to give ourselves in service "in the name of Jesus",
 - c) living the mission of Jesus faithfully – with love and respect for all – creates the possibility for mutual evangelization,
 - d) we *learn from* and *collaborate with* (cum gentibus) those who have welcomed us into their midst to share in the works of justice and peace,
 - e) we help to build the bridges with which to cross the multi-layered divides that pit people against each other causing serious brokenness in society, (and thus we can become ambassadors of reconciliation),
 - f) what will be required of us is a gradual self-emptying, a daily dying to self so as to 'put on the mind of Christ', discovering his way of being the first Evangelizer. (An early Marist missionary said that it was easy to leave his own country; it was much harder to leave his "self" every day),

- g) this empowers and impels us to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with our God and with our brothers and sisters.

My reflection continued: Isn't this the understanding of all missionaries today?

- Surely we have moved away from thinking of the "gentes" as heathens/pagan.
- Surely we do not go to the "other" with the intention of converting everyone to our faith.
- Surely we do not look for (or measure) success by the number of baptisms, or the total embrace of our way of perceiving the world and living in it.
- Surely...

At this point, I thought it best to re-read the paper and reflect further.

After reading the paper a few more times, I began to question my own surety that we have all experienced conversion and transformation from these deeply-rooted former (pre-Vatican II) concepts of the "gentes" and "mission". Surely the understanding of these concepts as presented by Peter today are not necessarily understood and embraced by all the baptized, all those who follow Jesus and thus, through baptism, participate in his mission to bring about the Reign of God.

And who among us (who call ourselves "missionaries") are still in need of this conversion and transformation? Perhaps there are more than I would like to imagine. This was a renewed call for me to examine my own heart, my own attitudes, my own receptivity to ongoing conversion and transformation. It was an invitation to review my own Constitutions and our texts on "mission" that express the core of our charism and to ask myself how well we live the ideal that is presented for us. What do they call me/call us *to live into* today?

For me, much of what Peter said this morning is reflected in the Constitutions of my Congregation (the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary), which were approved more than twenty-six years ago. The following excerpts are taken from the chapter entitled: AT THE SERVICE OF EVANGELIZATION which, for me, indicates a basic underlying attitude of the missionary... "at the service of". In our texts, Marist Missionary Sisters are reminded that:

Mission is the work of God:

"The loving plan of the Father
revealed by the Son
is continued in the Church through the power of the Spirit,
always at work leading all humanity in Christ, to the Father." (#11)

God sent Jesus to do God's mission:

"Jesus, sent by the Father, is the First Evangelizer. (cf. #12)

We participate in the mission of Jesus:

"In complete availability, we are ready to leave our own country,
to set out or set out again towards other peoples and other cultures,
knowing that the Spirit precedes us – ..." (cf. #16)

We go with respect and openness to mutual evangelization:

"Sent to those who do not know Christ,
those who are seeking to know Him,
or to local churches in need of missionary service,
we open ourselves to their way of life,
ready to receive as well as to give,
having no other aim than to seek humbly, with all,
the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness." (#17)

We do mission "in the name of Jesus", in a spirit of collaboration:

"In ...different services chosen, in the light of our tradition,
according to the needs of the country and the priorities of the local church,
we keep in mind that, in the light of faith,
it is Jesus Himself we serve in each person,

especially in the little ones, the suffering and the poor.” (cf. #19)

We are inspired by Mary’s attitudes:

“It is Mary who inspires our way of being at the service of evangelization.

Confident in her help, we seek to serve like her, humbly and discreetly, without imposing...so as not to impede God’s action in those we serve.” (cf. #20)

“We prepare or encourage others to take their own responsibilities...” (cf. #21)

“Among other peoples and in our own country, in respect and dialogue we try to be bonds of communion between peoples, races, and cultures, and witnesses to universal love.” (#22)

I would like to take a few moments to cite some concrete examples of these attitudes as lived by our sisters who participate in mission in Asia or with Asians in diaspora.

As a congregation, we engage in mission/ministry among and with the Asian people in Bangladesh and the Philippines. I will share two examples of Mission *Inter Gentes* that I recently witnessed in my visit to our communities in these countries. The first was in Bangladesh where our sisters work with the handicapped. Those who come to our centres are mainly Muslims and those who work with us are mainly Muslims. Parents (mothers) are encouraged to participate in the activities of the centre with their small children so that they can learn how to work with their children more effectively at home – in providing activities for them as well as learning how to massage weak limbs. An integral part of the process is to encourage these mothers who have chosen to keep their children and to love them despite their physical or mental limitations. The women themselves support each other and help each other beyond those hours when they are at the centre. And, as there is need and opportunity, the sisters quietly assist the families further.

In another instance, a sister works through a Catholic organization where she has developed a training programme for rural midwives. The participants are Muslims, Christians, and women from Tribal groups. Some religious women from other congregations have begun to participate as well. While the training programme is their reason for being together and there has been a tremendous success in bringing down the child mortality rate in their areas, a secondary benefit from this course is the relationships that develop among the women themselves. In this environment, they learn from each other, discovering aspects of each other’s faith traditions and cultures that they did not know before.

In the Philippines, our sisters are engaged in a variety of ministries, which include working alongside people (women and children mostly) in one tribal village, collaborating in ministry with street children in another area, and working with young people on one university campus of the Marist Brothers. One sister, the director of the campus Justice and Peace Office, works with teams of young women and men to create day-long and sometimes week-long activities for inter-faith dialogue, working for peace through knowledge, greater understanding, openness and respect of the other. In one instance, she became an advocate for a few Muslims students who were required to participate in a retreat before graduation. The end result was that she was able to arrange for one Muslim student to be guided by an Imam for “retreat” as an acceptable alternative to the required Catholic retreat.

In the United States, one of our ministries is with *forced migrants*, women who are victims of human trafficking. What we offer to these women is a safe home during a very difficult time of transition. This “home” is a simple dwelling where up to six women live with two of our sisters. We collaborate with other service providers who are responsible for health care needs, psychological counseling, social services, language studies or ongoing education, assistance with re-entry to their homeland or re-settlement in the United States. What the sisters provide, through presence and witness of life, is 1) a home, 2) listening hearts, 3) acceptance of each one as she is without judging, 4) encouragement for each to take her own responsibility for choices in her life be that to return to her country, settle in the United States or return to her former life. Over the last six years, many of the women victims of trafficking who have lived with our sisters in this home are from Asia.

It is true, as Peter indicates, that "...there are many teachings and practices of the religions and cultures of the *gentes* that missionaries would do well to learn and practice in order to be a better Christian and missionary." And, as he says, this was recognized by many luminaries with whom we are familiar (such as Ricci and de Nobili). However, I would just like to note my appreciation for Peter's acknowledgement of the role of lay women and women religious in "mission" in the distant past. This has too often been overlooked. Thank you for the reference to the pioneering works of Dana Robert on this topic.

One example of this "overlooking" is the fact that the eleven *Pioneers* of my Congregation who set out from France in the mid-1800's went to Oceania with the desire – as our first *Pioneer*, Marie-Françoise Perroton, put it: "to serve on the mission fields for the rest of my life" – were referred to as "the auxiliaries of the missionaries". The missionaries were, of course, the priests.

Once again, I would like to thank you, Peter, for your presentation and the challenges that it evokes for me and for all of us. Hopefully, we can rediscover our missionary call to be "guests" of the 'other', to walk gently with respect among the 'other', to be open to mutual evangelization and, when the time is right, to welcome others to our 'home' as honored guests.

Response to Peter Phan on 19 May 2011

Sr. Pauline Gresham, SMSM

Thank you, Peter Phan. On Tuesday evening Fr James Kroeger was given a question which he answered and added "but you might like to bring that question back to Peter Phan after he has spoken". Then yesterday Fr Pio Estepa told us of something that you had written and that we need to come to you to learn more, this morning Fr Carlos spoke of your "*sagesse*" and you yourself, yesterday, promised us "the full, complete, whole truth". Thank you for delivering. We have not been disappointed - we have been stretched.



I appreciated very much your definitions at the beginning which set the course so that we could see where you are coming from. You will have noticed in the room that we heard *ad gentes* and then there was a slight murmur when you spoke of *inter gentes* but when you came to *cum gentibus* there was, in your words, "a twitch and a twitter".

When you changed, "The Asians among us" to "Us among the Asians" you exposed us to another concept - and I think we have a lot to reflect on and are challenged to examine our attitudes.

Respect, reconciliation, collaborate with, alongside, being evangelized by and learning from are words we use in mission today - and I appreciate the way you have shown how and why these attitudes are necessary in Asia. This aspect of mission has been a gift from Asia to the universal church.

For our congregation our *Pioneers* went out to Oceania in response to an invitation from the women. They became immersed where they were. Many young girls came and lived with them right from the beginning. We have been *ad gentes* from the beginning.

The majority of our sisters were in Oceania until the mid 20th century and then we also moved to other countries, for example to Jamaica in 1940, to Algeria in 1952, to Senegal in 1958... These missions extended our perspectives. By the 1971 general chapter, we were choosing to continue to go to countries where we were to be evangelized by, in dialogue with, engaged in inter faith dialogue etc. etc. In the following years we went to Bangladesh, Mauritania, the Hindu population in Fiji, Indonesia and Maitum in the Philippines, an area that is predominantly a Muslim community. Then we tended to use language like it was "a call within a call" to go to some countries where one was "a presence", "alongside", "being open to learn from others", "prepared to wait with", etc.

I see the understanding of our mission evolving and we have all seen radical shifts. I think we now accept/promote that the attitudes of communion and collaboration are necessary wherever we are in mission. I do not say they did not exist before but perhaps we were emphasizing something else. I know today we give emphasis to the fact that our Pioneers were women who were open to receive and give. I believe we can find many examples of *inter gentes* and *cum gentibus* in our living God's Mission. We need to further reflect and claim or reclaim some of the examples of people who lived mission at the grass roots level and were the face of Christ to others.

When I heard you speak of inviting our trusted friends into our spiritual home to display its splendour... I was reminded of a very popular teaching aid used by Bishop Pompallier and the early Marists in New Zealand with the Maori people. Bishop Pompallier and the Marists arrived. They learnt the language. They listened to the stories of the Maori which included their genealogies - a very important part of Maori culture. So Bishop Pompallier and those early missionaries had their own genealogy shown on a large poster with an enormous tree beginning with Jesus Christ (*I am the vine you are the branches*)... the apostles, popes... connection with Lyon from whence the missionaries came. The one that still exists today shows a very worn spot on the Lyon branch as if they were saying... this is where we have come from, our *whakapapa*, ... it was an image the Maoris could relate to. A conversation starter!

Closer to home, I have another example of being in respectful relationship with the other. I live in Rome with one of our sisters who spent about 20 years in Bangladesh. I love going out with her because invariably we meet the young men from Bangladesh and she speaks with them - their puzzlement and caution turns to absolute delight. They have a friend. Many times in those few minutes she hears something of their story. They often thank her for speaking with them in their language.

Now after your presentation I go away with three challenges.

I ask myself:

- "Do I, in seeking the reign of God?
- Value reciprocal mission - a two way activity?
- Recognize and celebrate the goodness and holiness of people outside of my religious tradition and culture?
- Seek reconciliation and remember the past truthfully?

Peter, Thank You.

Fr. Bonnie Mendes

MISSION WORK AMONG CONTINENTAL ASIANS

INTRODUCTION



It is hard to speak about Asia. It is a huge continent. In fact a few of the countries are continents in their own right, so to speak. They are huge and the population of those countries is mind boggling. Hence, when one is given the topic of Asia, one has to state clearly which area one is talking about and may be even of a sub-region. And in that sub-region of Asia there will be different religions and cultures. So I hope you will bear with me when I make fairly broad remarks and at other times ones which only apply to one particular area.

My experience of Asia is limited. Yes, I worked for the Office of Human Development of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences for a few years, but that was thirty years ago and things have changed drastically within the last few years.

My second experience was working as the Regional Coordinator of *Caritas* Asia, within the last three years.

In both cases, I was more of a student than an expert, learning from what was going on and watching as experiments were being tried out. It is a fact that I did not make any new experiments that one can speak of. However, having worked at the National Commission of Justice and Peace of the Catholic Church in Pakistan for a more than a decade and having been in various ecumenical and inter-faith ventures, and having accompanied victims of injustices, I have some ideas to share with those who would like to get into the mission field today.

I am no scholar so I cannot give you a whole discourse on Mission, but I have closely followed the trends in the Church of Asia right from Pope Paul VI's Visit to Manila, the Philippines, 23 – 29 November 1970, which called for the setting up of the Federation of Bishops' Conferences. "The meeting stimulated an urge for more exchange, more collaboration, more friendship" (Fr Bonnie Mendes, *Church of the Poor, A Human Development Paradigm*, Maktaba-e-Anaveem, Pakistan, 2011, p. 92). Let me begin with some ideas emerging from the Theological Advisory Commission of the FABC and from thinking with the FABC. Very clearly the whole complicated realities of Asia have dominated the thinking. In the Asian Church the triple dialogue is very basic to all its thinking and work. It is the dialogue with the poor, dialogue with other faiths and dialogue with other cultures.

Archbishop Quevedo speaking at the Colloquium on the Church in Asia in the 21st Century in Bangkok said, "In the light of the massive poverty of Asian peoples, of the plurality of other faiths and the rich variety of their cultures, the Church in Asia has to be the Church of the Poor, a Church of dialogue and a Church that is truly inculturated, a Church then that is truly Asia", (OHD FABC publication papers).

From my limited experience in the field, that outlook and orientation is good, but many have found it hard to come to grips with what one means when one talks of the Church of the Poor. Christ himself said, the Poor will be with you always, so why do we want to put emphasis on the poor? Others object, do the rich not need redemption saying, why do you want to alienate them by putting all the emphasis on the poor. Besides, the poor themselves also are not always happy with the idea. They were born poor and have lived a life of extreme poverty, they do not even want to think and talk about poverty, that is something to be discarded and condemned.

CHURCH OF THE POOR

When I interviewed Bishop Labayen I put this question to him directly, "what do you mean by the Church of the Poor?". He replied, "Clearly it is a matter of emphasis and where your heart is. It has to dominate your thinking, your attachments, your priorities. The poor is everything. They must dictate the agenda. Their way of doing, their way of speaking, their way of putting their ideas across are central to the concept of the Church of the Poor. It is their Church, we, even Bishops are the listeners and learners". That explanation of Bishop Labayen requires from us a true *Metanoia*. It challenges us to become learners. All too often when priests, brothers or nuns or lay persons are getting ready to go on Mission, they are full of enthusiasm and

sub-consciously they think they know how they are going to teach. Their outreach *Inter Gentes* and *Intra Gentes* is good, but it can be that the concept of learning from the poor does not come into the picture.

Pope Paul said, "The people themselves have the prime responsibility to work for their own development" (The Progress of peoples, five Great Encyclicals, St Paul's Publications, Pasay City, the Philippines, 1974, p. 254).

And that is something I would like to stress in my presentation. Trust the people. Hand things over to them. Remember Knowledge is with the poor, they have the *wisdom* that we do not have. They know hard realities having lived in extreme poverty. We have to be willing to suffer and learn and forget about teaching others.

THE CHURCH OF DIALOGUE WITH OTHER FAITHS

The Church in Dialogue with other faiths is complicated. No matter how serious and interested we may be in dialogue; it is a two-way street. It is the believers of different faiths coming together. There should be no compulsion. There are some from among us and some from other faiths who only join in with the hidden agenda of conversion. No dialogue is possible in this atmosphere. It has to be a dialogue so as to explain our perceptions and to learn the perceptions of the others. The Church in the last twenty years has certainly increased her contacts with other religions, but in the process, perhaps, the Ecumenical aspect has suffered.

THE CHURCH IN DIALOGUE WITH OTHER CULTURES

Dialogue with other cultures is very difficult as well. That is yet another challenge. Each culture has its own thinking, philosophy, outlook on life, orientation. It imbues a group of people and they live their cultural life naturally. The missionaries, no matter how long they may live in the place, were brought up in another culture and with the set of values of another culture, find it extremely difficult to accept their values, their way of thinking. One just has to forget one's past and live a new life and that is not always easy. Most missionaries find this very hard, bad enough that they have to learn a difficult local language and more often than not other dialects of the people of the area they are sent to work with. For a missionary who is full of zeal, full of knowledge, that he/she wants to impart it is hard. They are forced instead to become serious learners. At best they can squeeze their sharing while learning all the while from the other cultures.

Fr. James Kroeger, MM, in his paper, "Asia's Rich Diversity — A Pathway to Mission" shows this in the diagram on page 7.

LOCAL CHURCH >>> <<<DIALOGUE>>><<<TRIPLE DIALOGUE

Subject	Approach	The Result
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The local Church in Asia is the active subject, the methodology is Dialogue The fruit is Triple Dialogue. This is the strength of the Asian Church and one that is hard to be lived in practice, especially as the other faiths are becoming more fearful of anything Christian.

SEE — JUDGE — ACT

If you use the See Judge Act methodology first proposed by Leon Olle-Laprune, later made famous by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, we will notice a close relationship what the Office of Human Development of the FABC has been promoting in Asia especially at some of its programmes. As reaching out to the workers and the grass-roots approach was used; Economic poverty, Religious pluralism and the Variety of cultures always came to the fore. Here, I would like to remind this audience that in the analysis at OHD programmes, Transnational Corporations were always criticized for what they were doing in Asia, (the Chinese in Africa is a phenomenon of today) but the Asians have suffered from these giants in the field of business for centuries and continue to suffer till today.

DIFFERENT EXPERIMENTS

Different groups are finding their own dynamic ways of responding to the challenge. Some congregations are sending missionaries from different countries to a Mission Country to form an *intra*-nation group of their own.

Yet another example I can cite is from Thailand. Certain Churches have started looking for Thais abroad and they send them back to Thailand to begin their congregation in Thailand. They are mainly seeking to help people while still others are looking for conversions. They are defeating the Visa problem by sending Thais back to their countries as Missionaries.

OTHERS OPENING TO A LOCAL CHURCH

Many people in the past two days have been asking me about Pakistan. I would love to speak about our Church. However, in this forum I will cite what is happening and how the Church in Europe is responding to the new challenges that the smaller Churches are facing. There was a Programme of Martyrs of Freedom in France this month. The Press was there. Three Bishops were present, one from the Coptic Church of Egypt, the Archbishop of Mosul, Iraq, and the third one was the Catholic Bishop of Faisalabad, Pakistan. They spoke on the Martyrs of Today. Bishop Joseph Coutts of Pakistan highlighted Clement Shahbaz Bhatti, the Federal Minister for Minorities, who was gunned down in broad daylight in the capital city of Islamabad, in March 2011, because he spoke up for the rights of the poor in Pakistan. Earlier there was a Programme at the Cathedral of St Bartholomew here in Italy, where the Bible of Shahbaz Clement Bhatti was placed among the relics of recent martyrs. The Universal Church is extremely interested in how the over two million Catholics and other Christians are facing the challenges of a resurgent Islam.

WORK OF CARITAS IN ASIA

Besides the work of each National *CARITAS* in each of the 22 Member Organizations of *CARITAS*, a Regional Office has been set up in Bangkok.

CARITAS Asia has grown in the last few years. At one time, the work of *CARITAS* *generally* only dealt with natural disasters. That continues to some extent as one disaster after another hits Asia. But since then *Caritas* has moved on from emergencies to animation development and advocacy. *CARITAS* Asia is trying to make an impact wherever it can. Below I give you some examples of the programmes and the voice *CARITAS* is trying to raise in Asia and in the world.

STUDY OF SHELTERS

CARITAS Asia has made a thorough study of the post-Tsunami disaster of 2004 and has written a book on the lessons it learned. That book will be published this month in India. Fr. Maria Soosai from Chennai, head of the team comprised of different people from difficult countries, who worked on the Tsunami disaster, will be publishing this book in India. It is to be hoped there are enough lessons that all development workers and agencies working on development will find useful.

COMMUNITY BASED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMMES

Regarding manmade and natural disasters, we have had Risk Reduction Programmes and Community Based Disaster Management Programmes. They are being published in India again, the Resource person was Jude Henriques from India. There are ten manuals and they will be exhibited at the *CARITAS* Internationalis General Assembly next week. Once again, we hope to be better prepared for disasters. The manuals are meant to be training manuals that can be translated and used in different regions to avoid major damage and casualties. Although there will be damage, much can be done to reduce the loss.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING PROGRAMMES

CARITAS Asia has an Anti-Trafficking Programme especially for women and children. Training of Trainers programmes have been held and with the help of some active women in the Philippines, India, Thailand and Nepal, *CARITAS* Asia has launched a programme to address the problem.

CLIMATE AND AGRICULTURE PROGRAMMES

Another programme is the Climate Resilient and Eco-friendly Agricultural Management (CREAM) Programme that seeks to meet the challenge in the field of agriculture, especially to have Organic farming and programmes that can foresee the damage that climatic change will cause and prepare for the worst.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Programmes to highlight the need of Inclusive Education for Persons with disability have been held and will be further developed in the future. Just last year a Programme was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to study Community Based Programmes with Persons with Disabilities. This will be followed up soon.

PEACE BUILDING PROGRAMMES

A Programme of Peace Building began this year with a Training of Trainers in Bangkok conducted by the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. This programme will be continued with sub-regional programmes so that the National Member Organizations can launch Peace Building efforts of their own.

CHANGE IN CARITAS AND OFFICE OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Bishop Isao Yama Kikuchi of Japan is taking over as President of *CARITAS* Asia from Bishop Yvon Ambroise of India. It is an interesting period in the life of *CARITAS* in Asia as the Asians will decide what they want the Programme to deal with in the next four years. At the same time Fr. Nithya has taken over the Office of Human Development from Brother Anthony Rogers, so more dynamism can be expected from that Office now.

CONCLUSION

A CALL TO START WITH THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES

In my estimation, the most important programme that OHD held was the Bishops' Institute for Social Action (BISA). That programme was really important to get the Bishops and Major Religious to understand the Catholic Church's Social Teaching in the context of today. A very important aspect of the programme was that it began with an *exposure* programme. "Exposure to the poor to meet, listen, dialogue and live with them were part of the BISA Programme" (Fr. Bonnie Mendes, *Being Church of the Poor, A Human Development Paradigm*, Maktaba-e-Anaveem, Pakistan, 2011, p. 135).

The purpose was to make the Bishops learn from the poor. They reflected on what they had learned during the field visits and the results were studied further with experts from the field of sociology and anthropology, only then came the theological and spiritual reflections. This grounding in the reality of Asia is extremely important so as to bring the teachings of Jesus into the fertile soil of Asia.

Fr James Kroeger, MM, has pointed out to you some important aspects that of Constant in Asia. You have heard of all the Variables from Fr Pio Estepa, SVD. Peter Phan has given you the Theology Appropriate for the Church in Asia in this century. Now, it is up to you to take the step and change. I would like to challenge you to change. It is not merely making a small change, and just changing the label. I have seen that done much too often in the past. We have done almost exactly as in the past and said, "this is the Church of the laity". We kept to the old practices, and made cosmetic changes calling it: "Participatory Church", and so on. I want to challenge you to understand what is really needed. It is being open to the Spirit, starting by putting ourselves into the hands of the Lord and beginning anew. It is like trying to walk on the lake as Christ stretches out His hand to help us. It is a challenge to be truly open and to become radically new. Christ has asked us to Love all. While we wish to stress *inter gentes* and *intra gentes*, we have to spread the Love of neighbour.

Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* says, "Love of neighbour grounded in the love of God is first and foremost the responsibility of each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility of the entire ecclesial community at every level". Surely this is an invitation to the Religious to spread Love everywhere.

BE THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Good News is not a piece of news of the past, it is the living experience of Risen Jesus as experienced by the women who ran back from the empty tomb to tell the Apostles the News. It is the experience of the Apostles themselves of the Risen Jesus ☐☐ in the breaking of the bread, blessing it and giving it to them. It is that experience that we have to reflect upon, make it our own and share it with Asia. Sixty-one per cent of the population is waiting for you to refresh it with the Good News. You have it, share it with love. You are the Body of Christ. Be then His Body in Asia.

Sr. Dr. Lea Ackermann, MSOLA

"MISSION WORK AMONG ASIANS OVERSEAS"

INTRODUCTION

Dear Guests,



I want to welcome you to this lecture about missionary work among Asians overseas. I am a missionary sister and before I start, I would like to explain what missionary work means to me. When I decided to join the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, two things were important to me:

1. I always thought that the Gospel was important and convincing for a meaningful life. I was young and had a lot of ideals. In my opinion there were many people in Germany who had been baptized and called themselves Christian but did not live their lives according to what Jesus taught us. I always thought that these "Sunday-Christians", as I called them, were so full that I did not want to talk to them about the Gospel. I wanted to go where people were still open to the words of Jesus Christ.

2. I also wanted to travel the world. I was adventurous and curious

about everything unknown and foreign people were fascinating to me. I joined the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa because they send all their sisters to Africa.

Irrespective of my personal experience, the mission at that time was under the imperative "Implantatio ecclesiae" which means that the Church was to be spread all over the world: with the Holy Roman liturgy, the theology and the Christian traditions. This imperative came from the belief that outside of the Church there is no salvation, no moral and no remarkable sustainable qualities of life.

It was the Council that made the crucial change in suggesting that the work of God was and still is always present in His Creation, in all people and religions. This means that there is nothing and nobody outside of God's work. This is why the mission is under the sign of dialogue. So, if God allowed mankind to exist He then gave us all the values and abilities that are necessary for salvation. Therefore the aim of missionary work is to make people of different cultures and religions see the value and to connect it to the word of Christ. So it is no longer Christian or ecclesiastic indoctrination but rather the unfolding and leading of everything that exists to a quality that serves peace and justice between people, as I first observed in the Philippines and also in Africa.

(PowerPoint sheet 1, cf. DVD)

To start this lecture, I would like to show you this picture of a sister from the Carmel in Infanta that was taken in the Philippines! The writing on the tree says: "Dedicated to the dreams of our Father/ Mother". The sister told me that when they ask parents what their wishes are, the reply is that they want their children to be healthy, go to school, not to keep bad company and that they may find a good partner for life.

God, as Father and Mother of all people surely also has wishes for his children.

We, the followers of Jesus Christ, should help make His wishes come true. This has always been my motivation.

I remember this very impressive encounter with the Sisters of the Carmel in Infanta. Bishop Labayan, a Carmelite, had invited the Sisters of Manila to build a monastery among the fishermen, farmers, workers and their families on condition that these eight Sisters would each spend one month living in a Christian family to get to know their hard way of life. These Sisters were used to living in poverty and earned their living through farming and knitting inside the monastery. But the monastery they came from had been built by the Spanish and was more like a fortress.

Those eight Sisters who were to open the new monastery in Infanta took on the challenge and each one went to live in a family. One Sister told me that the farmer and his wife who she stayed with had eight children and that they earned their living by farming a small piece of land. However, this small piece of land projected into the land of a big farmer and this was why the big farmer did everything he could to chase the family away or to make them work for him instead. The Sister, who had witnessed this while she was living in the family, told me that she was a religious and a good woman but that when she saw this injustice, she became a rebel. The other Sisters had had a similar experience, so they built a very simple monastery with

an open garden and allowed the farmers to harvest there if they had no more to eat. The farmers were very grateful for this offer but they never took advantage of it.

(PowerPoint sheet 2, cf. DVD)

2. The work of SOLWODI

Now I shall tell you about the history of SOLWODI and explain what we do to make the wishes of our Father come true for women in misery that have become victims of forced prostitution and violence. Our organization – SOLWODI (the abbreviation for “Solidarity with women in distress”) fights the trafficking of persons.

After I joined the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, I spent seven years preparing for my first mission. I became a teacher and went to Rwanda to train teaching students. I got to know the people and was fascinated by their hospitality, their kindness and their helpfulness. But they were also very different. There were a lot of misunderstandings. Actually, I think that we Europeans have preached and ordered too much and acted in a contradictory way. Stealing is a sin, but took their land so that they could no longer farm it. If we are to spread the Gospel we should do so by living it and not only by preaching it.

When I had the chance of getting to know the Church in the Philippines, in Taiwan and Thailand, I was impressed. There they would discuss the demands of Jesus in everyday life. Do the people in the Church live their lives according to the Gospel? How do we have to live in order to bring the Gospel to the people? In the Philippines, I met Bishop Labayan and saw his community that was made up of a group of religious men and women from different Orders who had gathered to live with the poor farmers and workers and bring them Christ's supportive message in their everyday life. They also openly criticized the rich people who were violating the Gospel. On this visit to the Philippines, I also went to see the community of the Urban Missionaries who lived and worked in the slums together with the people. I was impressed by these ecclesiastical initiatives. They were not keeping quiet and they were not afraid of the powerful members of the State and Church. It was this theology of relief that fascinated me. I felt this was a serious effort to translate the message of Christ into everyday life.

If we as Christians believe that God is our Creator, the father and mother of all human beings, then all human beings are his children and need to be there for each other. We Religious Sisters have a special commitment to do so in following Jesus Christ.

(PowerPoint sheet 3, cf. DVD)

When I went to Africa for the second time 26 years ago, I wanted to care for women and children who were living in poverty and therefore had no prospects in life. It was especially the women and children who were caught in prostitution through poverty, who needed help.

I began my work in Mombasa, Kenya, where I founded “SOLWODI” (Solidarity with Women in Distress). In 2002 we also founded another project called SOLGIDI (Solidarity with Girls in Distress) to help the daughters of the prostitutes. Because of their mothers' poverty they have little chance of getting a good education and are especially in danger of ending up in prostitution as well. This is why SOLGIDI takes care of these girls and pays for their education, helps them find work and is there to help them if they have problems. The girls in this programme are aged from 4 to 14 years. When I returned to Germany 24 years ago, I also founded SOLWODI there.

(PowerPoint sheet 4, cf. DVD)

Today, SOLWODI has 15 counselling centres and seven shelters for women throughout Germany. 52 female employees who are prepared in social work and counselling work for SOLWODI. The 17 religious sisters come from 13 different congregations. SOLWODI also has 10 counselling centres along Kenya's coastal region: the SOLGIDI project in Mombasa and a project for widows and orphans in Kigali, Rwanda. In 2010 we were also able to open a counselling centre in Romania.

(PowerPoint sheet 5)

In Germany we have a special returnee project to help the women who wish to go back to their home countries. The women receive support for their return home, with grants for travelling, support in establishing economic independence and initial counselling in Germany to develop perspectives for their future. When they arrive back in their home countries, a local NGO that cooperates with SOLWODI takes over the responsibility for the counselling, project supervision and ensures the proper use of the funds. The women can get a vocational or school qualification for up to one year. If necessary, their living expenses are covered. Some women receive a micro credit to help them set up a business. Seventy per cent of this credit

is an interest-free loan, 30% are granted. The interest-free loan is then repaid to the local NGO for their women projects.

3. Modern missionary work among Asian women

From the beginning there were Asian women and children that contacted SOLWODI in Germany. During the first years it was mainly women and young girls from Thailand who had come to Germany through an arranged marriage or for prostitution. Also many Philippine women came to Germany, either with American Soldiers who had been stationed in the Philippines and called to serve in Germany or through the embassies. When the Eastern borders were opened a lot of women from the Eastern European countries also came to Germany.

(PowerPoint sheet 6, cf. DVD)

This figure shows the development of the contacts with Asian women over the past 10 years. During my visits to Asia I met people of many different religions, like Christians, Moslems and Buddhists but also people, in China for instance, who had no religious background at all. The women from Asia who contacted SOLWODI come from a lot of different religions and some are not religious at all.

One of the very first women to come to SOLWODI in Germany was from Thailand. A German had literally bought her through a wedding agency. He was divorced and had two children by his first wife. After he had brought the young woman from Thailand to Germany they lived in a garage. She cooked for him and if he didn't like it, he would throw the plate and food at her. His intention was to keep her as dependent on him as possible. When they took a walk and she saw a cow for example and asked him what they called it in Germany, he would say, "moo-moo". In desperation the woman went back to the agency that had brought her to Germany to complain about her husband, but the agent took advantage of her and raped her. She then went back to her husband and discovered that she was pregnant. After she had given birth to her child she contacted SOLWODI. She had heard about us from a woman she knew. We helped her to escape, found a flat for her and her child and financed a German language course for her. She is a very proud and ambitious woman and is now working as a waitress in a hotel. She got her driving license and bought a car and even a small house. She is fully integrated into German society. Her son went to school in Germany and when he was nine years old he wanted to be baptized so that he could go to Communion with his classmates and friends. In the beginning his mother was a little disconcerted by this wish and didn't know if she should agree to it or not. She was a Buddhist and this automatically made her son a Buddhist too in her opinion. She taught him how to pray the Buddhist way but then she decided that she did not want to isolate her child from his surroundings and friends and allowed him to be baptized. Today, she visits the church sometimes but also goes to a temple when she is in Thailand. She is in close touch with SOLWODI. We are her new family and we were and always will be there for her.

Another woman who came to us in a situation of great need was from China. I would like to read her story in her own words:

I came to Germany in 1990 to work on a scientific project. After a few days in this foreign country I discovered that I was pregnant. My husband was absolutely against this child because he already had one from a former marriage and if we had another one, it would have been against the law in our country and we could be prosecuted. So they wanted me to abort the child. When I refused, my work contract, the rental agreement for my flat and my Visa were cancelled, in order to force me to go back to China. Had I gone back though, I would have had no chance of keeping my child. In this desperate situation I turned to SOLWODI. With the help of Sr. Lea I was able to extend my Visa for a year, so that I could give birth to my daughter in Germany. After that returning to China would have been very difficult, because we had violated the one-child-policy. Nevertheless, my application for a Residence Permit was declined. Sr. Lea and SOLWODI took my case to the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Federal Ministry of the Interior and then I finally received a Residence Permit for me and my child. SOLWODI kept on supporting us by financing a language course for me and by helping me to find work. Today, I am working as a doctor in a laboratory, my daughter attends the German high school and our application for naturalization has been accepted. We will never forget the humanitarian help that was given to us by SOLWODI.

Many years later her daughter wanted to be baptized. While she was taking Bible courses, she told me that she wished her mother to be baptized as well, so that Jesus would help her too with her sorrows.

(PowerPoint sheet, 7 cf. DVD)

It is our prophetic role as religious people to proclaim the Gospel of love....

(PowerPoint sheet 8, cf. DVD)

...by taking a radical stand against every new form of hatred, slavery or exploitation of the weak and against the domination of the powerful.

We have to network with one another so as to be stronger: in our campaign against trafficking, in helping the victims and in addressing politicians and law-makers to propose and sustain policies to eliminate this plague. We have to proclaim the Gospel of love by giving migrants our attention and respect as well as seeking to understand their world with openness.

(PowerPoint sheet 9, cf.DVD)

How can we say that God is Love without making people in need feel His love through our help?

Thank you very much for your kind attention.



Sister Lea Ackermann
burns with passion for
Christ and for humanity.

Mrs. Dr. Cristina Liamzon

ACCOMPANYING AND JOURNEYING WITH OVERSEAS FILIPINOS IN ITALY

Context of Filipino Migration into Italy

ISTAT (2011) data show that the total number of foreigners in Italy is close to five million or about eight percent of the total population. Out of the five million, an estimated 123,584 Filipinos currently live and work in Italy as of 2010 (ISTAT, 2011), constituting some 2.9 percent of the total population of foreigners in the country and the sixth largest foreign community after the Romanians, Albanians, Moroccans, Chinese and Ukrainians.

Filipinos were among the first migrant groups to come to seek work in Italy, starting in the late 1970s and 80s. They are mainly employed in the domestic or family care sector as caregivers and domestic helpers. Given the employment opportunities in this sector and the fact that women take up these jobs, it is not surprising that close to 60 percent of the Filipinos in the country are women.



Just in the last five years, from 2005 to 2010, there has been a 50 percent increase in the number of Filipinos (Wikipedia. it) who have come to Italy. It is expected that this number will continue to grow given the new openings to bring in direct hires from the Philippines as well as from other countries and the Italian family reunification programme that allows migrant parents to bring over their children up to the age of 18 years.

The increase in the Filipino birth rate in Italy is also contributing to the growing Filipino population in the country. In 2008, 1,598 Filipino babies were born, indicating a 14.6 percent increase from the previous year. It is likely that in the future, the number of Filipino migrants into Italy will continue to grow, not only because of the pull factors of higher salaries that can be earned and the presence of family members who arrived earlier, but the push factor of the lack of well-paying jobs in the Philippines that can support the basic and other needs of family members, such as university education, housing, medical care, etc.

While the official government statistics show over 120,000 Filipinos legally living in Italy, it is difficult to estimate the number of irregular or undocumented Filipinos who entered the country earlier as tourists who stayed on and/or were trafficked into the country by recruitment agencies that often unscrupulously prey on and take advantage of would-be migrant workers. Compared to the trafficking of migrants into other countries and of other nationalities, however, Filipinos in Italy have not suffered as much. The Italian Government, aware of Italy's need for migrant labour to work on farms and in factories and other work which many native Italians are reluctant to do, has actually instituted several amnesty programmes for undocumented or irregular migrants so that they can live and work in the country legally. The first of such amnesties was instituted in the late 1980s. And the various *decreti flussi* of recent years serve to control the flow of migrants into the country, although the influx of migrants especially from North Africa and the Middle East has not abated, especially with the recent political and civil unrest and violence in the Arab world.

The Italian Social Security and Pension System is now becoming increasingly problematic, because of the decrease in the working population of native Italians contributing to the system and the aging population who rely on the Social Security can only be propped up by the contributions of migrant labour. Of the so-called 'new' Italians, or the migrant population, that now constitute some five million, two million are employed and contribute about 11 percent of the Italian gross domestic product (GDP), and pay taxes amounting to about € 33 billion. The 3.5 percent of the companies that migrants own and operate pay some € 7.5 billion of the country's social security (*Caritas Migrantes* 2010 — *Dossier Sull' Immigrazione*).

The Filipino migrant workers in Italy continue to bring their family members or neighbours into Italy despite the sometimes huge sums needed to do so, costing as much as several thousand dollars. Many of these

family members are spouses and children who come under the family reunification programme. In 2008, about 16 percent of Filipinos came to the country to join their families compared to almost 79 percent who came for employment (Colombo and Martini, 2010). A recent study showed that in 2008, 83,589 residence permits for Filipinos were issued by the Italian Ministry for the Interior, of which 65,000 were for work reasons (ISTAT, 2008). About 99 percent of these residence permits were issued for “subordinate work” (ERCOF, 2009).

Gains and Challenges of the Filipino Community in Italy

That the overseas Filipino workers, or OFWs, in Italy have been able to improve their incomes as well as their families' economic conditions in the Philippines cannot be disputed. It is no small matter that Filipinos in Italy are among the highest migrant remittance senders compared to other migrant nationalities. For the years 2004-2007, Filipinos were the third largest senders of remittances after the Chinese and Romanians. When it came to *per capita* remittances, Filipinos came second highest, second to the Chinese (ERCOF, 2010).

These remittances have generally been spent to send children to school, including private schools and universities, to build houses, as well as for the basic needs of family members, such as medical care and emergencies. A few have been able to start small businesses and invest their savings. Many OFWs however, prior to coming to Italy had to borrow considerable amounts to finance their travel and placement costs, at times mortgaging properties to do so. The income of the first few years is thus spent on repaying these loans.

However these remittances have not been entirely positive as they have tended to create a culture of dependence for family members back in the Philippines who view this money as a never-ending flow of resources from their relatives abroad to finance not only their consumption requirements but also their rising penchant for luxuries. Parents who leave their children behind in the Philippines suffer from a guilt complex for their physical distance and absence which they make up for by buying almost everything that their children request such as the latest gadgets, clothes, toys, etc. The members of the family who are left behind, although capable of working, feel no strong compulsion to look for work if their needs are taken care of by their OFW relatives. In time, they succumb to a life of dependence on the monthly remittances from abroad. Meantime, the OFWs constantly complain of the stress and hardship they experience in their jobs in order to meet the continuing demand for funds and remittances from family members. Growing numbers of Filipinos who came in the first waves of labour migration in the 1980s and are now approaching retirement or have actually reached retirement cannot stop working completely because they have to meet the needs of their children or even grandchildren. Many were not able to save or invest enough of their earnings to retire to a comfortable lifestyle in the Philippines, and certainly not in Italy.ⁱⁱ

It is not only the family members left in the Philippines whose values appear to have been negatively influenced by the onset of overseas migration and the culture of dependence on remittances from labour migration. In Italy too, couples as well as parents, feeling the pressure and the attraction of earning more, take on as many jobs as they can, even if it means no holidays, not even Sundays or days off. It is not uncommon for parents to actually neglect their children or at least to trade off important quality and quantity time with their children for overtime or extra work. Thus it is not surprising that many children, particularly those who were raised in the Philippines and came to Italy at an older age, do not easily form strong bonds with their parents. In fact, children tend to rebel against their parents who feel they have neglected them and do not really care for them. Findings from a study in 2010 on Filipino children who reunited with their families in Italy confirm other migrant studies elsewhere that show the emotional difficulties migrant children face as indicated by communication problems and the lack of closeness to their absentee parents (Liamzon, 2010).

Other Social Costs of Migration

The reality of the two aspects of migration is something that is not fully understood nor seriously considered either by the Philippine Government or the migrant worker in Italy and his/her family in the Philippines. The positive effects of migration and its contribution to the Philippine economy as described in the previous section are offset by the negative consequences on families.

Couples too experience tremendous strains and challenges in their relationships especially spouses who are physically separated for years at a time. Issues of infidelity, both one-off or more usually, permanent relationships formed either by a spouse left behind in the Philippines or the one in Italy, have caused serious break-ups in marriages and the fragmentation of families. This sociological phenomenon and the consequence on the children have yet to be really studied.

However, it is the Filipino children and youth, either born and/or raised in Italy and those brought to Italy at an older age who tend to suffer the most or for whom migration has been at a higher social cost.

The emotional and identity issues that young people have to grapple and contend with as they go through puberty and young adulthood are compounded with being migrants in a foreign country with a vastly different language and culture. As found in other studies, not only among Filipino migrant youth but migrant youth in general, cultural integration is much more difficult to achieve if the children are unable to master the language of the host country and fully integrate into the school system. Thus, as to be expected, Filipino children born and raised in Italy, going through the Italian school system, have minimal problems with integrating into Italian society. In fact, they become in many ways, as Italian as any native Italian children, taking on many of their values, culture and habits. At times, this can cause considerable clashes, anxiety and disappointment for Filipino parents, raised in the Filipino culture and traditions who consider Italian children and youth as too 'fresh' or disrespectful of parents, etc. The great problem is how to achieve a good balance between inculcating what is best in the Italian culture and preserving as well what is best in Philippine culture.

For the children and youth who were not raised in Italy but only came to the country in their teens and been formed primarily in the Philippines, studying under the Philippine educational system, the challenges are very different. In terms of their integration into Italian society theirs is the more difficult hurdle. The lack of Italian language skills presents the first of many issues they have to confront in coping and surviving in the Italian school system which is closely linked to language proficiency. Liamzon's preliminary study (2010) on these youth show that the lack of adequate grounding in speaking and understanding the Italian language as well as socio-psychological preparation greatly impede the migrant youth's capacity to cope with school and to socialize with the Italian students. The problem of bullying in schools thus becomes more serious. The tendency is for these youths is to stick to their own sort or to other migrant youth.

Studies show that many migrant youth, including Filipino youth who have difficulty in school tend to drop out resulting in a downward spiral in their integration process. Some are pressured by parents to look for employment in as much as they no longer want to continue their education in Italian schools. Thus, many are likely to end up in the future in similar dead-end jobs as their parents. Quite a few fall into dysfunctional forms of behaviour such as drug abuse and teen-age sex. Still others are pushed into 'gangs' and 'fraternities' as a way to find peer acceptance and bonding.

Another hidden but equally disconcerting issue is the lack of an impelling vision and ambition of the youth themselves in their host country or back in the Philippines that can serve as the motivating factor to make them resilient and determined to pursue an ideal. Without vision and any possibility of change and opportunities, it is difficult to see how the youth can improve their status in the host country, especially with minimal support and encouragement from their parents and other institutions that can make a difference in their lives.

Moreover, it is not only the youth who suffer or experience this lack of direction and vision; OFWs armed with college degrees and substantive employment experiences in semi-professional or professional jobs (as teachers, principals, supervisors, government employees, etc..) discover that it is difficult to find work other than family care services. Discouraged and constantly hearing from other Filipinos that these are the only openings, they become resigned to getting old and stuck in their jobs and comfort themselves that at least they have their pensions to look forward to. Despite new information that there are other employment opportunities if one were to enroll for upgrading courses or obtain more language proficiency, a large majority, especially those who have been in the country for many years, have become apathetic and disheartened.

The Role of the Filipino Church in Accompanying Migrant Filipinos and their Families

It has been observed by the religious and civil authorities in Italy that Filipinos are among the more organized, if not the best organized among the migrant communities in the country. In big cities particularly, Filipino Catholic communities are almost always present, organizing regular Sunday masses and religious celebrations, Bible study groups, and various kinds of devotions. These communities also function as social networks, often geographically linked, of migrants and their families. Different social activities, including get-togethers, fiestas for all occasions are held immediately following the observance of the Sunday masses as well as serving as a means to collect funds to assist members who may need emergency financial assistance or even for contributions to send back to the Philippines in cases of disasters or to support local projects such as scholarships for needy students.

In Rome, Pope John Paul II gave the Sta. Pudenziana Church to the Sentro Pilipino Chaplaincy in 1991 and a formal parish for the Filipino migrants was established under the Diocese of Rome. The Sentro Pilipino Chaplaincy turns 20 years old this year and currently brings together some 45 Filipino Catholic communities all over the city with membership ranging from 20 to a few hundred. In Milan, there are four Catholic communities that regularly worship and celebrate together. In many other cities in the country, a chaplain or visiting priest serves the large numbers of Filipino Catholics but most of the priest's involvement with the communities focuses on the sacramental needs of the faithful because of the limited availability and time that the priest or chaplain can give to the other pastoral needs of the faithful. Exceptions to this are Rome or Milan which have relatively more pastoral staff. In Rome, it is fortunate that there are many Filipino priests and nuns studying in the many Pontifical Universities who are able to volunteer to assist the migrants particularly in sacramental-related activities.

The Sentro Pilipino Chaplaincy implements a wide range of services and programmes for the Filipinos in Rome including job placement, Italian language classes for beginners, Catechism preparation for the sacraments of Confirmation, the Holy Eucharist and Matrimony.

In 2006, the then chaplain deemed it important to extend the Chaplaincy's outreach and services to the Filipino communities by forming the Family Ministry under the Commission on Youth and Family. This was done after a small study was completed on the situation of the Filipino youth in Rome as a joint activity of the chaplaincy and an NGO, the Associazione Pilipinas OFSPES (Overseas Filipinos Society for the Promotion of Economic Security). The study organized focus group discussions with separate sessions for parents and for youth and explored the issues and concerns among Filipino youth, particularly those in their teenage years, as discussed in the previous section (Liamzon, 2006).

The Family Ministry was formally set up with the goal to help relationships within families and among family members, whether spouses or parents and children. With many problems among Filipino youth or between spouses or between parents and their children becoming common and widespread, one of the first programmes the FM developed was a counselling programme.

Specifically, a Hopeline (telephone counselling) was started in late 2006 with the help of several religious nuns and some lay pastoral workers to give counselling services (or more basically, a sympathetic ear) to those experiencing emotional and psychological problems. This eventually led to collaboration with the UGAT Foundation, a Jesuit Apostolate in the Philippines offering counselling services to poor and migrant families. The director of UGAT, a professor at the Psychology Department of the Ateneo University in Manila, is assisting the FM to enhance the capacities of our counseling volunteers as well as to orient Filipino communities on understanding the role of family ministries in their own communities. Several short training sessions have been held for volunteers and starting in June 2011, a one-year certificate programme on counselling for Filipino migrant families will be conducted (using internet technologies as well as actual face-to-face sessions) as a collaborative programme of the Family Ministry, UGAT and the Ateneo University.

To prepare engaged couples for marriage, an 8-session Pre-Cana programme was drawn up using the materials from the Archdiocese of Rome translated and adapted for Filipino couples. The sessions are given by members of the FM, with resource persons from a Filipino lay Catholic movement with chapters in different parts of the world. The Post-Cana/Marriage Enhancement seminars with the formation of a Marriage Support Group are designed to help already-married couples living in Rome. Single people (separated from their spouses by distance or emotionally, widowed or by choice) also have a monthly Singles' Support Group seminar.

Together with the Youth Ministry under the Commission on Youth and Family, the FM also organizes Parent-Youth Dialogues which aim to enable the children, particularly teen-agers or those who grew up in the Philippines without their parents to share and voice their feelings to their parents. The aim of these dialogues is to reestablish better communication between parents and children, a rather difficult task given the lack of time and skills especially on the part of the parents for open and true communication and dialogue.

A home visitation programme by the FM members among Filipino families to pray together as well as provide opportunities to share their issues and concerns within the family was initiated in 2007 but has only been implemented intermittently due to competing priorities. For a year, in 2008, a spiritual direction program was given to FM members and the religious linked with Hopeline to strengthen the spirituality of the ministry's core of volunteers.

Assessing the Family Ministry Programmes and Services and Looking Ahead

How successful these various programmes have been has not yet been systematically assessed. Often and especially in the early years of the CYF and the FM, the work has not been particularly encouraging. The attempts to recruit members for the FM to volunteer to work at the chaplaincy level to serve the communities in their own family ministries, to convince people to attend (or organize) or avail themselves of the services and programmes being offered have not yielded the numbers hoped for and envisioned. There have been many disappointments, even frustration when trying to reach out to the Catholic Filipinos in Rome who seem more concerned with their regular Sunday masses coupled with the regular birthday, anniversary, and other celebrations which leave little time for attending to socio-psychological-emotional needs and growth of members and others.

An additional formation programme for pastoral workers was initiated in 2010, this time to strengthen the knowledge and understanding the basic Catechism and on what it means to take on leadership roles in the different Filipino Catholic communities. This formation programme has two tracks: the Catechism part given by the priests and nuns studying in Rome and the leadership track given by trainers from another unit of the Ateneo University, the Ateneo School of Government (ASoG). From September 2010 to May 2011, the course was held two Sunday afternoons a month covering such topics as the important tenets of the Old and New Testaments, the sacraments, from what it means to be a servant leader, conflict management and negotiations to public speaking. All these are planned to assist pastoral volunteers to become more effective leaders and facilitators of their communities and groups, as well as to deepen their capacity to become good catechists.

NGO-Initiated and A Multi-stakeholder Approach to Empowering Migrants

Changing mind-sets
Building skills
Developing networks
Articulating dreams
Transforming lives....

These are the goals envisioned by one NGO, the Associazione Pilipinas OFSPES, in organizing a training course or actually an empowerment programme for Filipino migrant workers in Italy, in collaboration with the Ateneo University School of Government (ASoG) and three government institutions: the Philippine Embassy to Italy, the Philippine Overseas Labour Office (POLO) and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). The programme is called the Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship Training which aside from leadership and social *entrepreneurship* also includes financial literacy or education. The programme has planned 12 sessions over a six-month period, with two Sundays per month.

OFSPES Inc. registered in the Philippines also collaborates and provides support services through its representative in Italy. OFSPES stands for the Overseas Filipinos' Society for the Promotion of Economic Security. It plays on the Latin word '*spes*' which means hope.

The training programme, building on the Youth Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship Course given by the ASoG, aims to develop a new breed and generation of Filipino migrant leaders as well as of social *entrepreneurs* who could make a positive difference to themselves, to their families as well as serving the Filipino and other migrant communities in Italy.

The first LSE training was launched in Rome in April 2008 with 51 trainees, 37 of whom graduated in April 2009. As a result of the one-year training and mentoring, graduates have developed social enterprise plans and have gained new leadership and financial literacy skills that equip them to build or expand their leadership roles in the Filipino community. The second phase of the LSE1 involving the implementation of business plans by the graduates started in July 2009. Since then, with the success in empowering the first groups of LSE trainees in Rome, the organizers have expanded the training to other OFWs in other cities in Italy, with a shorter six month programme. As of April 2011, three programmes have been conducted in Rome, one in Naples and another in Milan with a total of 180 graduates from all five programmes. Four additional programmes are planned for 2011 and 2012 in Florence, Turin, Milan and Rome.

The Outcome and Impact of the LSE

The financial literacy sessions have had the biggest immediate impact in terms of change in lifestyle of both the graduates and their families encouraging graduates to communicate what they have learned to family members, especially back in the Philippines, particularly about the need to budget and save and to draw up financial goals

and to invest savings. Many graduates speak of having finally plucked up the courage to discuss financial responsibility or in some cases, confront their relatives and say 'no' to the numerous financial demands placed on them.

Several graduates have started to implement their social enterprise plans, including producing a magazine, facilitating financial literacy activities, setting up catering services, savings clubs, as well as playing a more active role in community activities. Some of the younger graduates, after having identified the problem of youth as the one they want to address in their social enterprise, have started in helping the Youth Ministry of the Sentro Pilipino Chaplaincy as facilitators.

Recently, a Questionnaire was sent around by e-mail to the trainees and graduates to obtain their frank assessment on how the LSE has influenced their lives, their families and their communities, if any. The survey returns show very positive feedback from the graduates who have begun to share what they have learned with family members, friends and even with strangers with whom they interact in buses or trains. Many from the previous LSE groups have volunteered and have actively recruited applicants to the other programmes.

Programme Characteristics

The training programme is the first-of-its kind for Filipino migrant workers in the following ways:

- it is a collaborative effort of Government, academia and civil society to help in the empowerment of migrant Filipinos;
- it offers a combination of building essential leadership skills, financial literacy and social *entrepreneurship*, allowing opportunities for OFWs, especially the youth to broaden their outlook, dreams and vision empowering them to pursue these;
- by encouraging Filipino migrant workers to become *entrepreneurs*, especially social *entrepreneurs*, who will be facing various social problems either in host countries or in the Philippines should they plan to return, transforming them into agents of social change;
- the programme aims to challenge the trainees to 'give back' or 'pay forward' from what they have learned thus helping to expand the programme's outreach and sustain the programme's goals and objectives over the long-term.

Programme Elements

- Training modules on servant leadership, financial literacy, social *entrepreneurship* (business planning skills), communication and facilitation, conflict management and negotiation, networking;
- Mentoring and 'hand holding' through various resource persons who serve as mentors to the trainees in developing their leadership skills, enhancing their financial education or in becoming social *entrepreneurs*. The mentors are identified locally as well as in the Philippines;
- Exposure to existing Filipino (and other migrant) businesses and Filipino civil society organizations (CSOs) locally to widen their perspectives and knowledge on *entrepreneurship*.

Conclusion:

The paper has presented two approaches to assisting and accompanying Filipino migrants in Rome: one by the Filipino Catholic Chaplaincy and the other by an NGO both of which we hope are making a difference in the lives of the migrants and their families. The Sentro Pilipino Chaplaincy and the Filipino Catholic communities serve as the mechanisms by which Filipinos can gather as faith communities and allow for the continuation of the Filipino culture and traditions through their faith practices. For those communities that are also taking some part in the Italian parishes, there are some opportunities to share common activities, even if on a rather limited basis. In several churches where Filipinos congregate each Sunday, the presence of Filipinos celebrating the sacraments and actively engaging in some of the Italian parish activities contributes to the life of the Local Church. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to integrate more fully into Italian parishes that would allow for less of the 'ghetto-ization' among the Filipinos who tend to stick together each Sunday, conducting separate Eucharistic celebrations, etc.

It is the hope and aim of the SPCR to provide for the pastoral care of migrant workers in Rome. These much needed programmes and services will address the many psychological, social and economic needs of our Filipino migrants and their families while facilitating their greater integration into Italian life and society.

The secular approach of an NGO such as OFSPES to assist migrants aims to change the mind-set of the migrants so that they can take more active steps to transform their lives socially, economically and politically, in a way taking off from some of the work that the chaplaincy does. The goal remains the same for both – to

accompany and assist in the empowerment of migrant workers so that they in turn can reach out to the many more who need to be reached.

End notes

¹ Migrants in industrial countries tend to be employed in the so-called 3D jobs, i.e., those that are dirty, dangerous and demeaning. These are the jobs that are not done by the natives of the host countries.

² The Sentro Pilipino Chaplaincy Rome with the Associazione Filipinas OFSPES is currently doing a small survey and study on the aging overseas Filipinos in Rome to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the situation of these Filipinos and what might be done to assist them to prepare for retirement either in the Philippines should they decide to return or in Italy if they remain. The study is expected to be finished by the end of May 2011.

A Filipino choir!



LISTENERS' REPORTS



The role of the Listeners is to keep track of challenges emerging from the floor as we move forward: What is alive in the conversation? Where is the Lord leading us? The three listeners chosen met every evening, shared their insights; and one of them made a synthesis of what they have heard and presented the synthesis every morning.

18 May 2011: Presented as a Power Point by Sister Filo HIROTA, MMB

Missiological Overview

Asia with its rich, complex, diverse and unique reality

FABC vision and praxis "a new way of being Church in Asia"

The triple dialogue

"The Good News from Asia" about mission inter gentes

"Obuntu" Relationships

Questions...

Dialogue vs. Evangelization.

Evangelization: WHY WHAT HOW

Asian Mission Landscape of the 21st century: a sociological overview

What does this reality speak to us?

Regarding Wednesday 18th and presented on Thursday the 19th at 9:00 am

By Carlos Rodriguez Linera, OP

Ayer fue un día muy completo y complejo.

Pio Estepa nos presentó una serie de mundos y pueblos diferentes que se están desarrollando y están progresando de una manera rápida, vertiginosa.

Esto conlleva muchos beneficios para los países y las culturas de las diferentes regiones; pero también conlleva grandes peligros y dificultades.

Las Mega-tendencias (mega trends) derivadas de estos procesos de desarrollo de los pueblos de Asia nos presentan un reto muy grande, comenzando por cuestionarnos el mismo sentido del significado de Evangelización: ¿Qué significa la evangelización hoy día, frente a estas Mega tendencias sociales?

Misión... Evangelización.... Necesitamos una nueva Mega visión?

Los retos son grandes y necesitamos encontrar una línea básica que nos una; la línea común a todas las gentes y que sirva de "Puente". **Pontifex...** mediador; constructores de puentes que unen personas aisladas

por los movimientos migratorios; que unen personas dejadas de lado por el progreso... y ofreciéndoles el toque de humanidad que les falta, que están buscando.

Hemos visto que Asia posee una mayoría de población joven; una juventud de la post-modernidad; la *e-generación*; generación erudita y perteneciente a la era digital.

Pero parece una generación de jóvenes aislados en su mundo digital y buscando una identidad propia y un espacio propio. Una juventud que ansía sentirse acogida dentro de un espacio propio y concreto, sin ambigüedades desestabilizadoras.

Hemos visto cómo esta juventud está cansada de tanta palabrería. Nuestra Iglesia es verbal, muy verbal; pero los jóvenes post modernos huyen de la verbalidad y gustan, buscan la imagen. Las palabras, los conceptos, son ambiguas; pero las imágenes les llegan; son concretas. Ellos buscan lo concreto; lo presente; el aquí y ahora.

- ¿Cómo misionar en estas culturas?
- ¿Cómo ser religiosos/as inter-religiosamente?
- ¿Cómo movernos de manera natural en medio de esta interculturalidad?
- ¿Cómo ser mediadores, puentes...?
- ¿Debemos dar soluciones a todo?
- ¿Tenemos que solucionar y dar soluciones a todo?

Bien, Jesús nos prometió que enviaría el Espíritu y que Este nos revelaría todo!

Y ayer también se nos prometió esta sabiduría... Esperamos, pues, la revelación que nos llegará del Espíritu de verdad por medio de nuestro speaker, Peter Phan.

Vendredi, le 20 mai :Ce que nous avons pu saisir de la journée du jeudi 19 mai, 2011

Par Sœur Nzenzili Lucie MBOMA, FMM

Peter Phan et l'Esprit Saint nous ont révélé ces quelques points saillants :

Il y a un nouveau monde qui est entrain d'émerger, saurions-nous nous frayer un chemin pour pouvoir en sortir ? Pour en sortir il y a grande urgence de ré-conceptualiser la Mission : un exemple très simple : le titre de notre Séminaire : « Les Asiatiques parmi nous » doit contenir aussi : « Nous parmi les Asiatiques » car il s'agit d'une relation de réciprocité, de solidarité.

En effet, la Mission vise avant toute chose l'établissement d'une nouvelle communauté humaine qui met l'être humain au centre de ses préoccupations. Ceci signifie faire la mission comme Jésus l'a faite. Et comme Jésus, le/la missionnaire sait qu'il est un/une hôte, c'est-à-dire une bénédiction et un don plein d'humilité. Sa mission le/la pousse à construire des ponts qui facilitent une circulation à double sens. Sachant qu'elle a des dons à mettre au service de la mission la missionnaire choisit de vivre la spiritualité de la kénose ; elle est prête à regarder, écouter, vivre avec afin de découvrir les trésors du peuple qui l'accueille, ce qu'il y a bon dans l'autre car elle est consciente que l'Esprit l'a déjà précédé ; et enfin célébrer la bonté et la beauté dans l'autre.

Le dialogue interreligieux en Asie est avant tout un dialogue de vie : pouvoir partager ensemble des expériences religieuses, prier ensemble, travailler ensemble et enfin ouvrir sa maison pour accueillir l'autre. Peter PHAN résume cela : « Etre religieux, c'est être religieux inter-religieusement ».

Faut-il parler de la Conversion en Asie ? Les Asiatiques ont des religions qui ont façonné et façonnent encore leur être, et leur donnent un sens profond d'identité. Il faut cependant offrir le message évangélique.

Comment maintenant articuler une théologie de la mission partant de l'expérience vécue sur le champ ; une théologie articulée dans une perspective féminine ? Nous avons la conviction et vivons la mission *inter gentes* et *cum gentibus* car la mission consiste à nous laisser évangélisés et ensuite évangéliser.

Pourquoi s'accrocher uniquement au concept *ad gentes* quand nous vivons déjà l'*inter gentes* et le *cum gentes* ?

La mission c'est Missio Dei et Dieu nous invite à y prendre une part active selon les charismes de nos congrégations respectives.



SECRETARIES REPORTS.

English Reports



REPORT ENGLISH – GROUPS 7-10

Day 1: Reactions to Pio Estepa's input

With regards to the megatrend of migration, new opportunities for mission open up. Migration is here to stay, it is not some passing phenomenon. We feel it is important that migrants do not stay in ghettos, without real contact with the rest of society. Lack of access to means is the basic problem many migrants face.

Several missionary actions were proposed:

- First of all, we have to grow in awareness and knowledge of the migrants ourselves: their culture, backgrounds, etc.
- We could work on creating support systems for migrant workers – building community in order to prevent isolation, help in learning languages or other skills necessary in their new surroundings, support against exploitation and abuse (example is how Western Union makes a lot of money because of the remittances), make them aware of their rights, etc
- Respond to the search for identity, help people hang on to the essentials
- We could promote projects for villagers to stimulate them to stay (or return to) the rural areas. A good practice can be found in Sri Lanka, where high quality schooling is being set up in rural areas by religious institutes.
- Create awareness among citizens about the situation of the migrants and the reasons for migration. We could act as bridge-builders between migrants and citizens. Our communities and parishes should become hospitable places where the stranger is welcomed. For example in Japan, parishes should become more hospitable, there are so many migrants there. Or in a society like India, we could build bridges between the castes.

The new mediatisation of especially the younger generations is a special challenge for us. We need to learn a new language ourselves which will draw us closer to the younger high tech generation - or alienate us less. We can look into ways of using the new media in our education programs. At the same time we should provide 'high touch' experiences, i.e. community building. A real human face-to-face community rather than a virtual community.

Day 2: reactions to Peter Phan's input:

We appreciated Peter's input very much. He showed us an approach to mission that appeals to us. Mission is not about sharing our truth (a sort of religious colonialism), but sharing in the truth, together with others. This requires an attitude of respect and openness. It is going open-handed and willing to receive and learn. We have to realize that truth is not an exclusive property.

A focus in mission on church leads to considerations of quantity, visibility and hierarchy. But if we realize that the mission is God's and not ours, then church becomes an instrument towards building the reign of God. Thinking in terms of the reign of God leads to a better understanding of building a community of people which is inclusive of all people, of all faiths.

It is problematic that quite a few of the younger generation of catholic clergy is returning to more authoritarian forms of leadership. It seems that sometimes the church is a hindrance to the reign of God.

The reign of God is sometimes almost tangible in everyday life, especially when people meet across cultural, social, generational divides and honour each other as brothers and sisters. We need to recognize these moments.

We still think all three terms ('ad' 'inter' and 'cum') are important. The difference lies in the attitude with which we live mission. In some regions in the world where there is a lot of antagonism towards the catholic church, sisters are much more able to contact people and work with them.

The evangelical and Pentecostal churches challenge us to build up communities where people look after each other and where people's emotional, spiritual and material needs are looked after. Our style of being present as religious is often institutional and not so close to the people. Our liturgies are often not so appealing. We lack mobility.

These churches sometimes create great risks for other churches because of their aggressive conversion tactics (India). But it is not a black-and-white thing. In some case there are possibilities of ecumenical cooperation with these churches.

Day 3

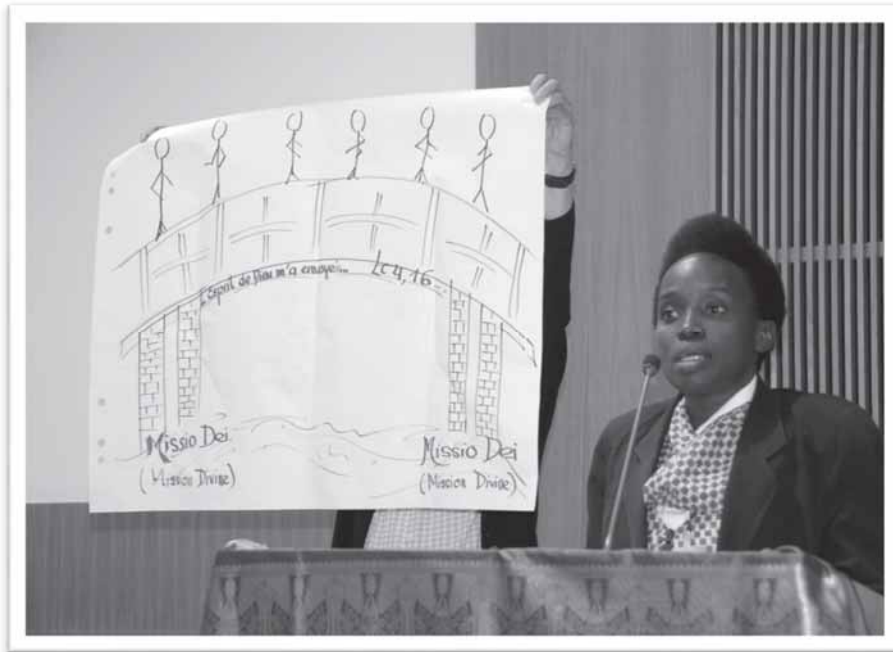
The reality of Asia was brought home to us by the speakers. The presentations gave new and practical ideas.

Challenges we bring home with us from this conference:

- We were touched by the passion with which sr. Lea spoke about her service. It poses a challenge to us. We need to think of the impact we could have if we agreed to collaborate and network on this problem of human trafficking. The powers that we are up against, i.e. in the field of trafficking, are enormous.
- Inter-congregational collaboration is necessary in order to face the challenges in these and other areas together.
- In the same way, working together with NGO's is something we must keep doing.
- Inspire the church to have a more global vision – not to look only at Europe and secularization in Europe.
- Incorporate the insights we gained in our institutes (being religious interreligiously; guest approach, etc.)
- The racism within ourselves needs to be recognized and challenged

French Group

CREER DES PONTS, ETRE DES PONTS



OBSERVATION

- . Voir l'Asie: ses réalités géographiques, sociales, économiques.
- . Voir la situation des migrants asiatiques et leur intégration dans les pays où ils se trouvent.
- . Se rendre compte de l'influence des Mass Médias sur les peuples asiatiques et plus particulièrement sur les jeunes.
- . Voir l'impact qu'a l'IMAGE sur les générations montantes.
- . Remarquer les nouvelles formes d'esclavagisme; trafic humaine, abus sexuel, exploitation au travail etc.
- . Prendre connaissance de la Mission de l'Eglise en Asie et du fonctionnement de ses institutions.
- . Voir la richesse de la diversité religieuse et culturelle des peuples asiatiques. Apprécier leur sens du sacré
- . Capter la réalité des cités asiatiques et l'avenir de campagnes dans ce continent

DISCERNEMENT

Nous ne sommes pas seulement en position de ceux ou celles qui donnent. Nous nous disposons à recevoir, à apprendre des autres, à vivre des échanges mutuels
Nous prenons le temps d'apprécier ce que nous avons vu et de nous laisser convertir.
Nous choisissons l'inter Gentes et le Cum Gentibus
Nous nous posons quelques questions: Quoi apporter? Comment faire? Avec qui? Quand? Quels appels, quelles réponses?

ACTION

Créer des ponts, être des ponts en travaillant au dialogue de vie entre les personnes de cultures diverses, entre les habitants des villes et ceux des villages, entre les croyants de différentes religions.
Apprendre la langue, les cultures, recevoir et donner: partager nos richesses.
Former les générations montantes à l'inter culturalité, au dialogue au delà des frontières.
Créer des centres d'écoute et d'accompagnement en réponse à des situations de détresse.
Développer notre relation au divin, à l'humain et, à la nature.

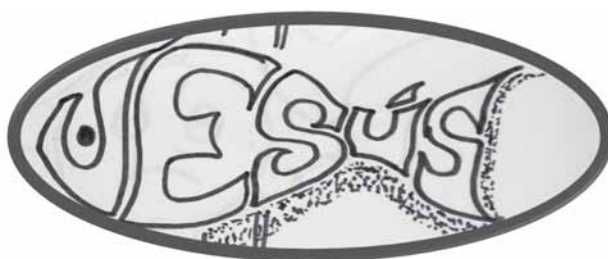
Faire justice à la femme. Collaborer avec elle dans sa propre libération.

Favoriser consciemment le fait que la femme occupe pleinement la place qui lui revient dans l'Eglise et dans la société.

Apprendre des autres croyants comme le Pentecôtistes et les Evangélistes: Accès et prière avec la Parole.

Oser ébranler nos institutions préconçues et ainsi faire advenir des changements dans l'Eglise.

Spanish Group



ALLOCUTION DE CLOTURE

Sr. Maria Pilar Benavente, MSOLA, Présidente

Bien cher(e)s ami(e)s,

C'est avec un sentiment mêlé de privilège et d'insuffisance que je vous adresse maintenant ce mot de la fin. Mes racines culturelles sont européennes et le contexte de mon expérience missionnaire est l'Afrique, plus particulièrement l'Afrique du Nord, avec une orientation préférentielle pour la rencontre avec les croyants de l'Islam. Je suis donc venue à ce Séminaire consciente d'avoir tout à apprendre sur l'Asie et, en même temps, convaincue que le contexte asiatique et la recherche missiologique, christologique, théologique de l'Asie peuvent être une source d'inspiration, un défi, pour nous qui vivons notre vocation chrétienne et missionnaire dans d'autres contextes que l'Asie.

Je n'ai pas été déçue !

Ce que nous venons d'entendre montre que beaucoup parmi nous, ici, partons élargis, provoqués,... ce qui est tout le contraire d'un sentiment réconfortant de satisfaction qui ne laisserait plus de place à la conversion, à la recherche et au questionnement.

Permettez-moi de vous partager quelques images, quelques associations d'idées, qui me sont venues à l'esprit pendant ces derniers jours.

17 Décembre 2010 - Sidi Bouzid, Tunisie

Mohamed Bouazizi, vendeur ambulant de 26 ans, s'asperge d'essence et s'immole par le feu devant la Préfecture de Sidi Bouzid.

Qu'est-ce qui l'amène à poser un tel geste? Le matin, il avait installé sa petite charrette de fruits et légumes sur un emplacement interdit. Des agents municipaux sont venus lui confisquer ses marchandises. Un peu plus tard, une femme-agent arrive pour lui confisquer aussi sa balance. Mohamed refuse de la lui donner. Ils échangent quelques insultes. La femme-agent lui donne alors une gifle et, avec l'aide de ses collègues, force Mohamed par terre. Publiquement humilié, il essaie de chercher un recours. Il demande de rencontrer un fonctionnaire mais il est renvoyé...

Humilié, désespéré, n'ayant pas de recours officiel pour faire entendre ses griefs, le jeune homme s'immole par le feu. Il est mort le 4 janvier 2011.

C'est cet incident qui aurait pu passer pratiquement inaperçu, qui a déclenché ce qu'on a appelé « la révolution du jasmin », « le printemps arabe » et qui a provoqué une révolte mettant fin à un régime dictatorial de 23 ans. Il a aussi été le point de départ d'un mouvement puissant, comme un feu de paille, un tsunami socio-politique qui s'est répandu et se répand encore d'un pays à un autre : Tunisie, Egypte, Lybie, Algérie, Maroc, Bahreïni, Yémen, Syrie, Palestine... jusqu'en Chine et, ces derniers jours, en Espagne.

Le gouvernement de Pékin a trouvé bon de censurer le mot "jasmin" sur le Web !

Je trouve fascinant qu'un mouvement d'une telle dimension ait été déclenché par l'auto-immolation d'un tunisien anonyme de 26 ans, un jeune vendeur de fruits et légumes.

Fascinant aussi quand on sait qu'il ne s'agissait pas d'une révolution religieuse (islamique) comme on serait portée à le croire. D'ailleurs, les jeunes manifestants n'appartenaient ni à des partis, ni à des organisations syndicales, ni à des associations de la société civile mais ils se sont identifiés à Mohamed Bouazizi.

Et nous ne pouvons pas ne pas nous demander quel concours de circonstances, quels facteurs favorables, quels liens dans l'écosystème global ont déclenché un événement dont la portée a été comparée à la fin de l'apartheid en Afrique du Sud ou à la chute du mur de Berlin.

Dès que la nouvelle de la mort de Mohamed est répandue, un jeune tunisien forme un réseau de 15 cyberactivistes qui collectent et répandent nouvelles, images, vidéo, arrivant de partout dans le pays, et le publient en Facebook et Twitter. D'autres cyberactivistes dans le monde assurent le relai...

Bien évidemment, c'est dans la rue que le peuple tunisien a affronté avec détermination les tirs de la police et a manifesté, résisté, partout dans le pays. Mais ce qui a permis et soutenu ce mouvement c'est la communication rendue possible par Internet et par Facebook en particulier. D'ailleurs, certains jeunes Tunisiens ne parlent pas de « révolution du jasmin » mais préfèrent parler de "révolution Facebook"

Facebook a été un outil efficace pour esquiver les barrières mises en place par le pouvoir afin d'empêcher les médias étrangers de couvrir les événements. Il n'y avait pratiquement pas de correspondants étrangers,

mais des petites vidéos (la plus part filmées avec des téléphones cellulaires) ont été diffusées sur Facebook et massivement exploitées par les télévisions étrangères pour informer l'opinion publique internationale et nationale sur l'évolution de la situation.

Vous avez certainement entendu parler ou lu à propos de « l'effet papillon ». Cette [métaphore](#) suggère que le battement des ailes d'un papillon peut déclencher une tornade et que des petites variations, de petites causes, peuvent avoir un impact sur des vastes et complexes systèmes. Charles Fort, dans son livre "New Lands" (1923) utilise aussi cette métaphore en disant qu'une migration d'oiseaux à New York pourrait causer une tornade en Chine.

Toujours de manière métaphorique, je pense à Mohamed Bouazizi comme à un papillon dont le battement des ailes, en décembre 2010, a déclenché une tornade dont nous sentons encore les effets...

Ces faits et ces métaphores nous apprennent quelque chose du monde contemporain dans lequel nous avons à vivre notre vocation chrétienne et missionnaire.

Ce monde contemporain, nous le regardons... ou plutôt nous en faisons partie, avec sympathie, curiosité et compassion (dans le vrai et beau sens du mot). Nous sommes perplexes et conscients de tout ce que nous avons encore à développer et à changer en nous-mêmes pour tenir ensemble, dans une tension créatrice, l'infiniment minuscule et l'infiniment vaste, le local et le global, l'identitaire et l'universel, le moi et l'Autre, le « nous » et le « eux ». Nous nous sentons bien petits, nous, les bâtisseurs de ponts, le pontifex, en constatant qu'après tout, tant de ponts se sont faits et se font encore sans nous et que nous avons tant à apprendre du savoir faire des autres. Et nous reconnaissons que, vraiment, vraiment, l'Esprit de Dieu nous devance et est à l'œuvre pour qu'advienne la Maison pour tous.

La Création gémit en travail d'enfantement et, nous aussi, nous espérons...

Et puisque j'ai utilisé la métaphore du papillon, permettez-moi de parler encore d'un autre insecte, encore une fois en tant que métaphore : les abeilles.

Dans cette partie de la Planète où nous sommes, le sud de l'Europe, c'est le printemps, une saisons de pollinisation.

La pollinisation est le transport de grains de pollen d'une partie de la fleur à une autre partie de celle-ci, pour en assurer la fécondation.

Or, l'auto-pollinisation est très difficile ; dans la plus part de cas elle est impossible. En général, il doit y avoir pollinisation croisée, c'est-à-dire, d'une fleur à une autre, d'une plante à une autre. Et pour cela il faut des pollinisateurs, un insecte, une abeille qui s'étant approchée tellement d'une fleur, ayant comme séjourné chez elle, repart avec un peu de son pollen, dirait-on « collé à la peau » et peut ainsi la transmettre à une autre fleur...

Le rôle des abeilles est vital dans les cycles de la vie des diverses espèces. Elles sont un élément dans la chaîne interactive des écosystèmes. La pollinisation est un facteur vital pour le développement de la vie sur Terre, même si souvent elle passe inaperçue à nos regards.

Ces jours-ci les concepts de Mission Ad Gentes, Inter Gentes et Cum Gentibus ont suscité des débats et parfois même des émotions parmi nous. Personnellement, je trouve utile et même nécessaire que nous continuions à conceptualiser, à définir, à différencier, à prioriser ces différentes approches et à explorer ce qu'elles impliquent comme approche christologique et ecclésiologique. Je reconnais aussi que cette conceptualisation nous laissera toujours insatisfaits (et tant mieux !) car la vie, la réalité sont toujours plus complexes et mouvantes que les concepts.

Cependant, pour terminer ce Séminaire, imaginons que nous sortons notre réflexion sur la Mission Ad Gentes, Inter Gentes et Cum Gentibus de la sphère théorique, conceptuelle, et que nous la plaçons dans la sphère de la métaphore, l'image, la poésie, la nature... En faisant cela, nous serions en train d'adopter l'approche de Jésus de Nazareth qui « ne parlait qu'en paraboles » et, en même temps, nous nous rendrions, peut-être, un peu plus compréhensibles pour notre culture contemporaine, post-moderne, à propos de laquelle nous avons dit, ces jours-ci, qu'elle est fatiguée, rassasiée de mots.

Par ailleurs, ces jours-ci nous avons insisté sur le besoin de faire aussi une « Missiologie d'en bas », partant de l'expérience et de nos histoires, surtout celles des femmes.

Que diriez-vous alors si nous regardions la Mission, avec tout le mouvement, la réciprocité, la dynamique et l'interdépendance qu'elle comporte, à partir du paradigme de la pollinisation et du rôle indispensable des abeilles ?

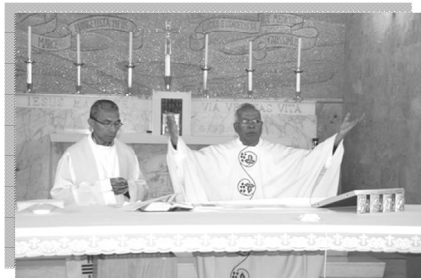
Mais cela sera pour un autre Séminaire SEDOS !

Merci beaucoup.

Executive Committee



Whom shall I send ?



I will bring your light



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